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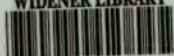
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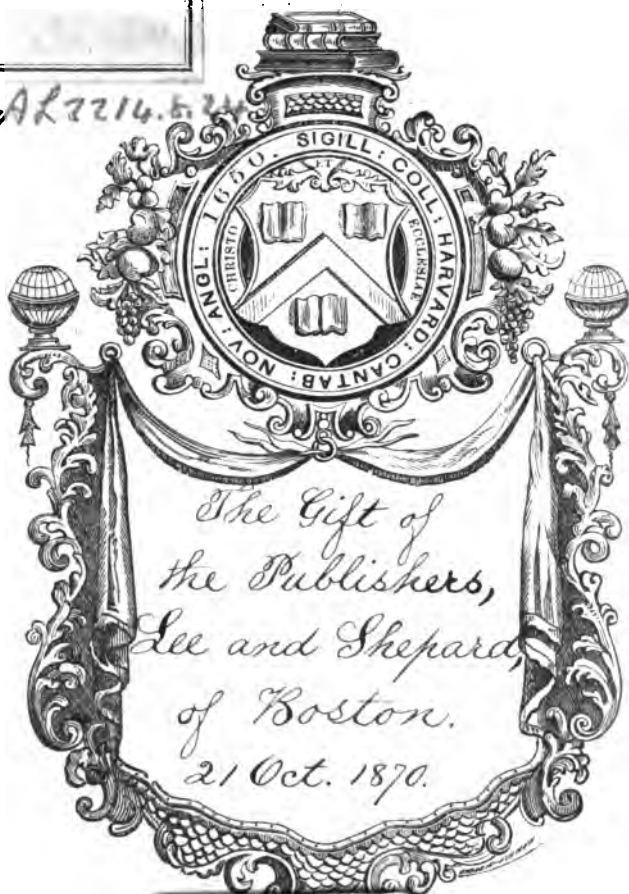
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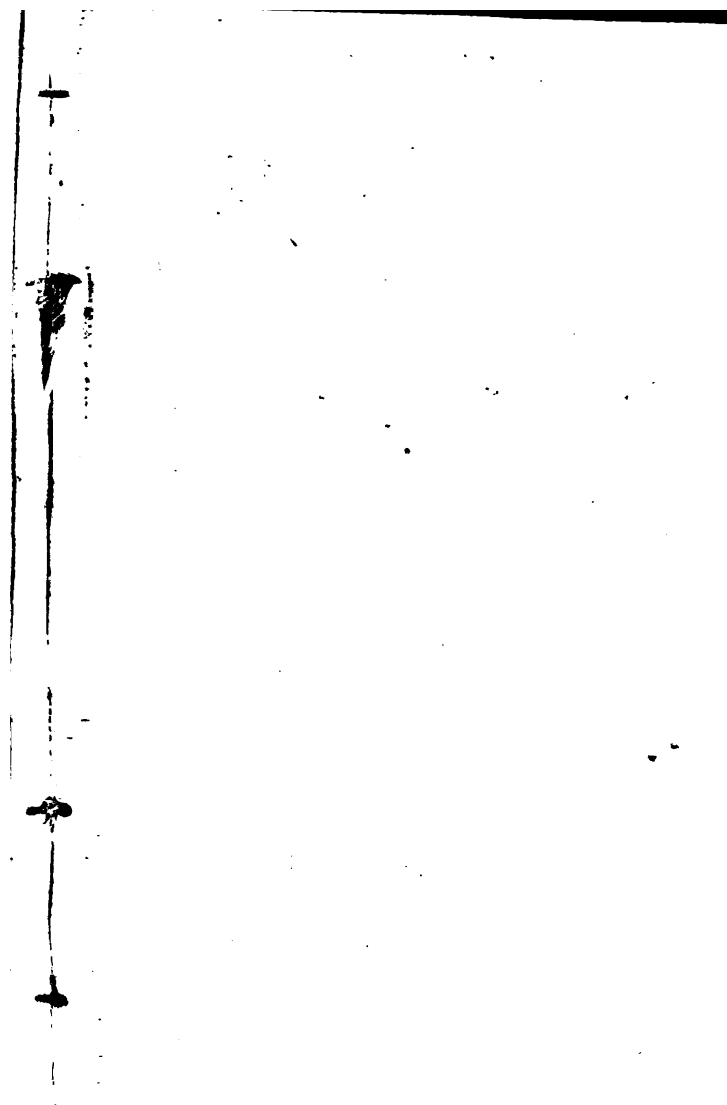
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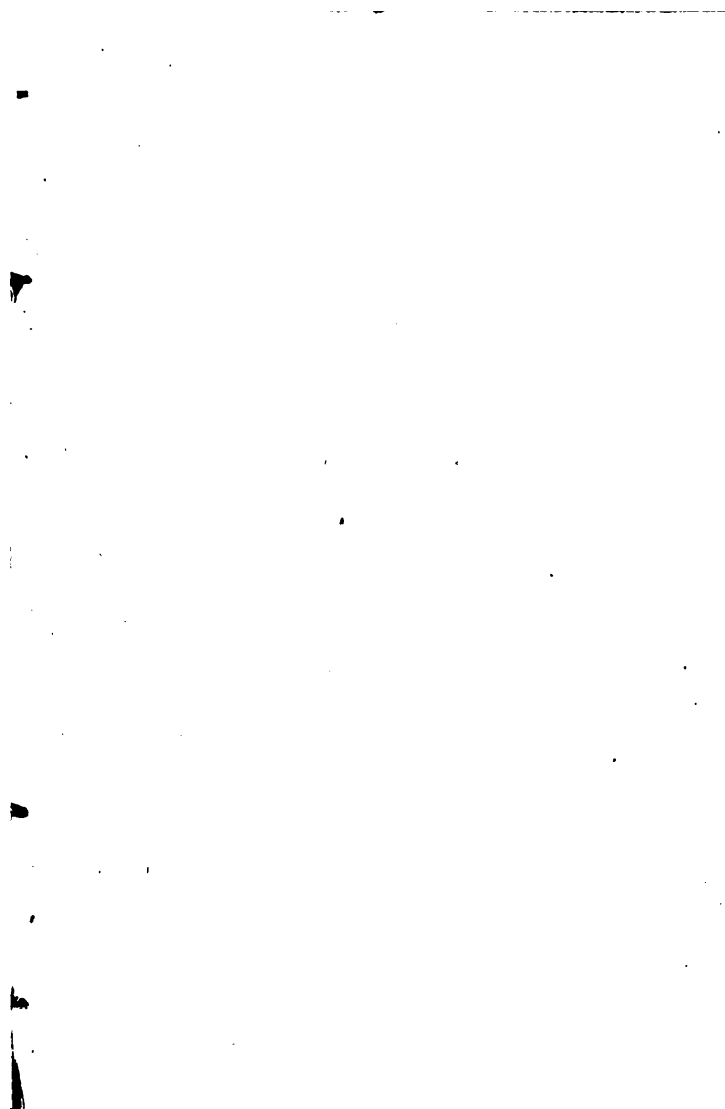


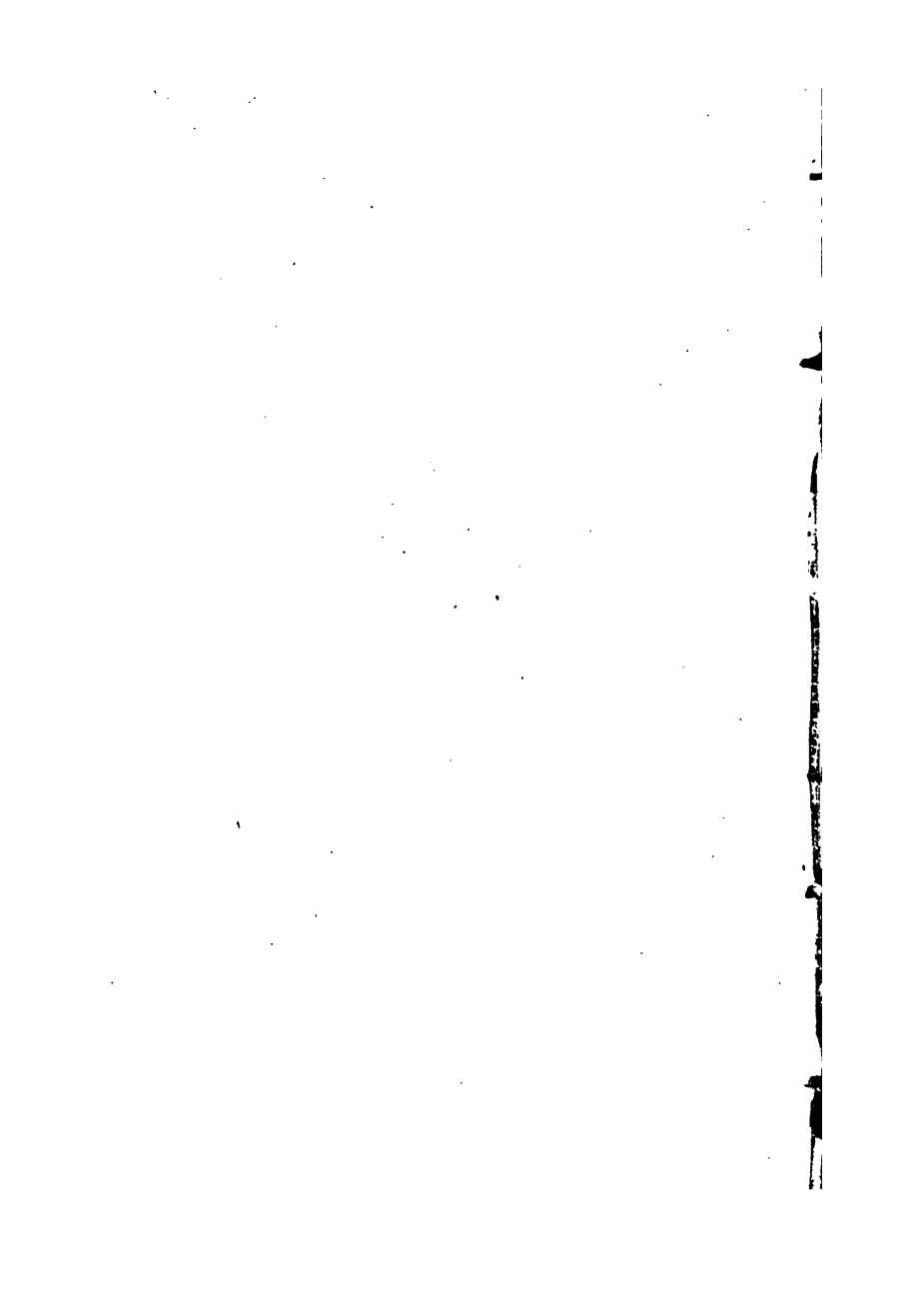
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TOO LATE FOR THE FERRY.— Page 21.



THE SPRINGDALE STORIES.

NETTIE'S TRIAL.

BY

MRS. S. B. C. SAMUELS,

AUTHOR OF "ADELE," "ERIC," "HERBERT," "JOHNSTONE'S
FARM," "KEMISFELLEN."

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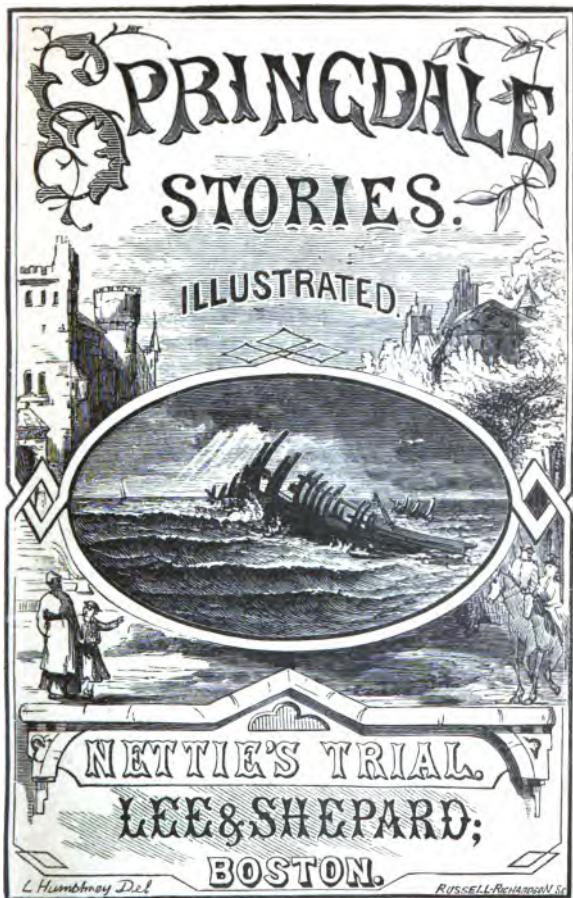
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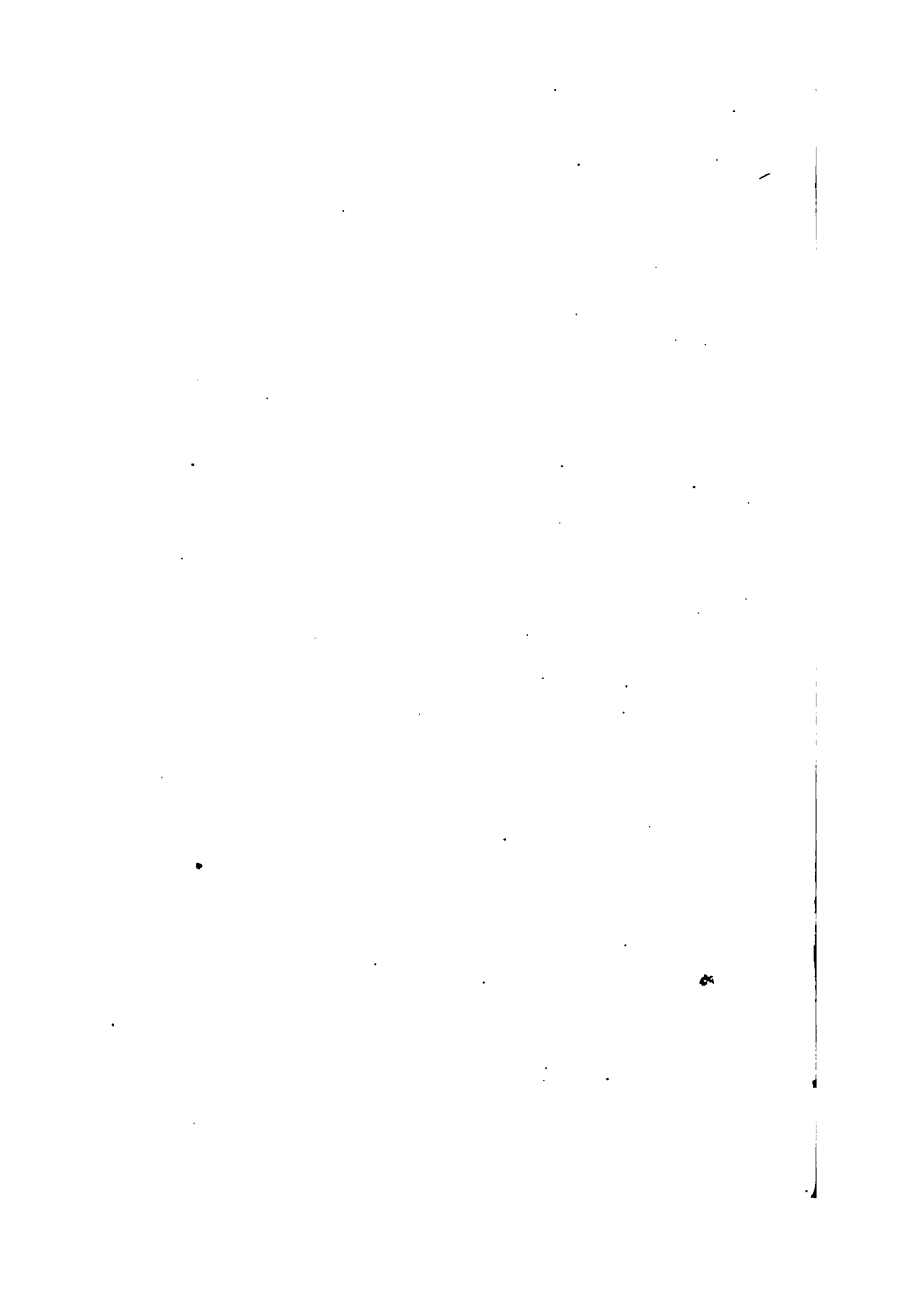
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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO

ELIZA ROSITA NOYES.

THE SPRINGDALE STORIES.

COMPLETE IN SIX VOLUMES.

1. ADELE.

2. ERIC.

3. HERBERT.

4. NETTIE'S TRIAL.

5. JOHNSTONE'S FARM.

6. ENNISFELLEN.

PREFACE.

THE character drawn in Nettie is one often met with; an impulsive child, well inclined, but heedless, she is, through an impulse or carelessness of authority, often disobedient, and in a measure deceitful.

I have in this volume endeavored to show the necessity of a strict and faithful adherence to the wishes and commands of a parent.

Nettie, after deceiving her mother, and disobeying her, is finally brought to see the error of her ways; but in order that the impression may be a final one, she is overtaken by a great and terrible trial — a loss of sight.

This infliction is brought upon her by one of her favorite companions, Laura Carmichael,

a misguided girl, entirely under the influence of a weak-minded, fashionable mother.

The characters are familiar, and easily recognized. Tom Carmichael's character, and his constant efforts for the well-being of all, and uncle Robert's love of wealth, and the terrible punishment for his dishonesty, will, I trust, be examples not lost by my young readers.

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NETTIE'S TRIAL.

CHAPTER I.

LAURA'S SECRET.

"**N**ETTIE! Nettie Hyde!" called Laura Carmichael, running down Fifth Avenue after Nettie, on her way home from school.

Nettie turned and waited until Laura came up to her.

"I wish you wouldn't scream after me in the street," said she; "you're so rude! Mamma was at the window, and heard you."

"O, bother!" returned Laura. "I guess, if you're going to read me a lecture, I'll tell my grand secret to somebody else."

"Secret?" cried Nettie, her curiosity instantly aroused. "What is it about?"

"Ah, that's the thing. A secret is a secret, you know."

"Now, do tell me, Laura," said Nettie, coaxingly.

"If you want to know it, you must come to my house this afternoon," replied Laura.

"O, I don't believe I can. I've got to practise."

"Very well then," returned Laura, dancing off backwards. "If you won't come, I'm sure I shan't tell you."

"But perhaps I can," said Nettie.

"I've no faith in perhaps," answered Laura, slowly continuing her backward dance.

"Now, Laura, dear, do tell me what it is," pleaded Nettie. "I will come if I can."

"It's something perfectly splendid; and I won't tell you till you are at my house."

"Why not?"

"Because it's an awful secret, and I don't mean to tell a soul but those who belong."

"Belong?" said Nettie.

"There!" cried Laura, vexed with herself for having let the word slip. "You needn't stand there picking my words up. If you don't want to come, that's all there is to be said about it. You won't know the secret, and Lillie Hall *will*."

"I thought you said you didn't like Lillie Hall, Laura."

"I don't like her; not half so well as you; but she's obliging."

"Well, ain't I obliging?"

"Not very, when you won't do as I want you to. I'll tell you, Nettie; you'll have a splendid time, and I'd rather have you there than any body else in the world; but unless you come I shall certainly ask Lillie."

"I don't think my mother will let me," said Nettie, hesitatingly.

"O, pooh! you needn't let your mother know anything about it. Come over this afternoon when she goes to ride, and you

can get back before she does. Now, Nettie, promise."

"Well," said Nettie, slowly, "I promise."

"There," cried Laura, "now you are my dear, splendid Nettie. Good by; I must go."

"Good by," said Nettie, looking after her as she danced off; and then the silly child, who had not strength of mind enough to say "no," went up the front steps, and into the house, and on, up stairs, to her mother's room.

"I wonder what in the world she's going to do!" she thought to herself; "she is always having mysteries; but I *do* wonder what this one is. I won't ask mamma," she continued; "she'd be sure to say I couldn't go, because she doesn't like to have me play with Laura. But I *must* know what that secret is. I wouldn't have Laura tell that Lillie Hall what she wouldn't tell me for anything."

Reaching and entering her mother's room, Nettie was greeted with a loving smile.

"Well, little girl, mamma has been waiting a long while for you."

"Have you?" asked Nettie; "what for?"

"I am going to Fair Oaks to get some things for auntie. Allan will ride with us; and now you may have your luncheon, and then we will go. I shall take baby, too."

"I can't go, mamma," said Nettie, quickly; and seizing the first excuse that presented itself, "I've got a composition to write, and my practising to do."

"Can't you write your composition in the evening?" asked Mrs. Hyde.

"No, mamma; it's a very long one, and my eyes trouble me evenings."

"Then I suppose you must stay, dear. I am sorry to lose you from the drive; but I am very glad to see you take so much interest in your lessons. You are quite right to give up a pleasure when it interferes with them. To-morrow afternoon we will have a nice excursion somewhere, to make up for your loss to-day."

Nettie reddened for shame at the deception she was practising, and she half resolved to stay at home, and write and practise all the afternoon, to punish herself for what she had said; for the composition was not required for two weeks, and she knew very well that she did not intend to practise.

But Mrs. Hyde, whose mind was full of thoughts of her sister, away in Germany, did not notice Nettie's confusion. She ordered the carriage, and kissing Nettie good by, and telling her again she was a good girl, left her at luncheon, and drove off with nurse and baby, to call for Allan, at his school.

Luncheon over, Nettie was still undecided as to what she should do. Conscience said, "Do not deceive your loving mother;" but as often as the little voice sounded within her, Nettie would put it aside petulantly, and return to her longing to hear Laura's wonderful secret, which, as she thought upon it, seemed to grow more and more desirable, as

all temptations do if we allow ourselves to dwell upon them.

Still not determined, she roamed about the room a few minutes, trying to come to a conclusion. At last she went up to the piano, and taking the waltz her teacher had assigned her, began to play it over, listlessly. The music happened to be very easy, and Nettie thought she could easily play it correctly at night for her father, without more study. "But I'll go through it twice," she said to herself, "for I told mamma I should practise."

So, in a very superficial way, she ran over the pretty tune, trying to deceive herself into thinking that this would excuse the falsehood she had told.

"There! I have practised," said she, although the little monitor, Conscience, assured her she had told and was now acting an untruth, and kept her mind uneasy; "and now I will go to Laura's. I will just stay long

enough to have her tell me, and then I'll come back and write my composition."

Even while putting on her hat and sacque, the little girl wavered between the right and the wrong. But, alas! she had thought so much upon Laura's mystery, and was so eager to learn the secret, that the wrong prevailed.

CHAPTER II.

NETTIE'S MISHAP.

LAURA'S home was in Brooklyn; and to go from New York to Brooklyn, one is obliged to take a ferry, to cross the East River, which lies between the two cities.

Nettie took the ferry from Fulton Street, and when she reached the Brooklyn shore, hurried up to Laura's house, on the Heights. Arriving, she followed the servant, who answered the bell, up a flight of stairs, and on to a room in the ell, whence sounds of merriment loudly issued. The servant opened the door for her, and Nettie passed into the room.

"O, Nettie," cried Laura, turning to-

wards the door; "I am so glad you have come!"

"What *are* you about, Laura?" was Nettie's reply; for Laura stood before a glass, smearing her face with burnt cork. Fantastic-looking garments were thrown around on the chairs, and a long, green curtain hung at one end of the room.

"Now I'll divulge my grand secret," said Laura. "I'm going to have a play."

"Pooh! is that all?" rejoined Nettie, quite disappointed.

"Wait a minute," answered Laura. "Now, Nettie, look there."

She spoke to some one behind the curtain, and stood pointing to it. The curtain rose, and Nettie uttered a little scream of delight; for there was a neat little stage, with side screens, and some of her schoolmates were dressed in costume, and parading about on it.

"O, Laura, where *did* you get it?" she cried. "Isn't it splendid?"

"Didn't I tell you it was?" said Laura.

"Mamma had it made, and gave a private opera for the soldiers. She lets me play with it as much as I want to, and I'm going to have you all help me act a play."

Nettie was dancing excitedly around the room. She ran up to the stage, and then off, to look at it from a distance.

"It's the very nicest thing I ever saw in all my life," said she, admiringly.

"We're going to play Uncle Tom's Cabin," cried Laura, going back to her burnt cork. "I'm going to be Topsy, and Lillie Hall is to be Eva."

"Why, Laura Carmichael!" cried Nettie, angrily; "you said —"

"I know it," interrupted Laura; "but I've got to have her; she's got long, light hair, just right for Eva. You can dress up, and be George St. Claire."

"I can't to-day," said Nettie, suddenly reminded of her resolution to return to the composition. "I must go right home."

"O, don't!" exclaimed Laura; and the

others now came down from the stage, and joined in urging her to remain.

"It would be awfully mean for you to come here just to find out our secret, and then go off again," said Laura, rudely. "Wouldn't it, girls?"

"Yes, to be sure; I shouldn't think you'd do so, Nettie Hyde," they all answered.

And Nettie, never thinking how much more "mean" and wrong it would be to deceive her kind mother, staid.

Laura finished blacking her face and hands. Her short, black hair was frizzled into a very good imitation of Topsy's wool; an old, faded, short calico dress, and a red apron, converted her into quite a respectable little negress.

Nettie parted her hair on one side, put on a black sacque, and seized a hat and cane, announcing herself as Massa St. Claire, and going with the others upon the stage. Topsy grinned, and explained how she "growed," was laughed at by Massa St. Claire, shaken

by Miss Phelia, and danced all recollections of time and duties out of Nettie's head, until some one exclaimed, "How dark it is getting!"

"O, dear me!" cried she; "what will my mother say?" and, dropping the cane, rushed from the room and out into the street, with the stage costume still upon her, and down to the ferry.

The boat was just leaving the pier, when, to the great amusement of the passengers, down came a comical-looking little figure, wearing a gentleman's tall silk hat, and calling, breathlessly, "Stop, stop! O, *do* stop!"

In four minutes another boat would start; but to Nettie it seemed all important that she should gain that one. So, redoubling her flying pace, she ran by the guardman, and, with a despairing groan, sprang after the receding boat, but missed the ferry and fell into the water, with a plunge that was calculated to cool her excitement.

A gentleman upon the shore immediately threw off his coat, and springing after her, caught the frightened child before she went down. Had she been drawn under the retreating boat she would have surely drowned, as no one could rescue her there.

Her brave deliverer bore her safely to the shore, and the tall, silk, St. Claire hat floated out to sea, where, finally, it sank, to astonish the mermen and maids.

Nettie was sobbing and crying, and begging to be taken home, and as soon as she could tell him where she lived, the stranger called a hack, and, wrapping his coat about her dripping figure, bore her home.

Meanwhile Nettie's mother had returned, and, on inquiring for her little daughter, was surprised and very much displeased to hear that she had been gone from home the entire afternoon.

It was growing dark rapidly, and she became quite anxious.

By and by her father came in from the

counting-room, and, as the child was still absent, he was on the point of starting out in search of her, when there came a violent ringing of the door-bell, followed by the entrance of a stranger, bearing Nettie in his arms, both dripping with water that fell in little streams upon the carpet.

"Good Heavens!" cried the father, starting in alarm, while Mrs. Hyde sank back upon the sofa, almost insensible from the sudden shock.

"She is not much hurt," said the stranger quickly; "she jumped into the water at the ferry, trying to catch the boat after it had started."

"And you saved her life? God bless you, sir!" cried the poor mother, reviving. "Eric, take her to my room, and send some one for a doctor."

"That will not be necessary," said Mr. Hyde, marching up stairs with the pale, penitent Nettie in his arms. "A hot bath, a good rubbing, and her bed, would be the

doctor's prescription. You naughty child," he added, angrily, "if you were a boy you would have a whipping. How can you worry mamma so?"

"O, Eric," cried Mrs. Hyde, following; "don't scold her; I am sure she has suffered enough already."

So her father said nothing more, but having deposited the trembling child in the bath-room, and leaving her with a tender hug and a kiss that belied his words, returned to thank the stranger who had saved her life.

"Now, sir," said he, "how can I thank you? What shall I do to prove my gratitude? You have saved —"

"Indeed, Mr. Hyde," interrupted the stranger, in familiar tones, "I deserve no thanks. And as for having saved the child's life, she could not possibly have drowned; there were a dozen men close at hand."

"But none of them made an effort for her rescue."

"They had no time," answered the stranger. "I sprang after her when she jumped, for I knew she could not catch the boat, as there was at least a yard of water between it and the pier."

Mr. Hyde had by this time turned up the gas jets in a broad stream of light, and now turned to look at the guest, whose face he had not been able to discern in the dim twilight.

"Johnstone, I declare!" said he, hastening forward, and extending both hands. "I thought your voice was familiar. So to you I owe my little girl's life. You may be sure I shall never forget the debt. But you are dripping wet: you will take cold. Come with me and change your clothes."

In vain Johnstone assured him there was no danger to his rugged health in the wet garments. Mr. Hyde insisted, and led him off to his room.

And while they are gone, and Nettie is receiving a rubbing that would almost quicken circulation of the blood in a mummy,

we will call the attention of our readers to the fact that Johnstone, who, we hope, is not forgotten by them, is the one who unintentionally kept Adele Stanley from her friends when she was lost on the cars, and who afterwards rescued her from the circus troupe, and took care of her until she found her relations. He had been kind and good to Adele, and she had become very much attached to him.

Johnstone had once been tempted to a very wicked act. He had stolen money from a bank when he was a boy of nineteen, and the disgrace of the theft was now the one dark spot in his life. Little Adele, with simple, child-like trust in the loving kindness and tender mercy of the good Lord, had led Johnstone to repent of the deed, to believe in God's love, and to forsake his old ways and wicked companions, in an earnest effort to become a good and honorable man.

Mr. Hyde and Mr. Nichols, Adele's grandfather, came forward nobly to his

assistance. They saved him from the penalty of his crime, and, together, arranged for the purchase of a fine western farm, which Johnstone had taken and already paid for. Both had heard frequently from him, and knew he was prospering finely ; but this was the first time Mr. Hyde had met him since he had left New York for his western home.

On returning to the parlor, after seeing Nettie warm and comfortable, Mrs. Hyde was agreeably surprised to find who the stranger was to whom she owed her gratitude.

"Mr. Johnstone," said she, holding out her hand to him, "we can never repay you. It is only last week that a child was drowned at that very place, and when I think of my darling's danger — you are our friend for life."

"You are determined to make a hero of me, I see," answered Johnstone, pleasantly. "I am glad I saved your daughter, though

I do not really think she would have drowned."

"It might have been," answered Mrs. Hyde; "but, thanks to you, she is doing nicely now."

"And now tell us about yourself," Mr. Hyde said, interested to hear of his success. "We want to know all about the farm, and the house you have built, and everything, in fact, which you have to tell us."

Johnstone answered slowly, drawing a receipt from his pocket-book, "This is perhaps an important item."

Mr. Hyde read it. It was an acknowledgment of fifteen hundred dollars, in full of all demands, received from Johnstone by the — Bank, which was the exact sum, with the added interest, of the money he had abstracted.

Mr. Hyde grasped his hand. "I always knew you were an honorable man, Johnstone," said he.

And the man, with tears in his eyes,

replied, "Now, at last, thanks to a prayerful, tender mother, an angel sister, and sweet little Adele."

Mrs. Hyde was deeply touched. She thought how many noble, useful lives were destroyed because of one wrong deed; how few there were who were willing to be kindly helpful to their erring brothers; and how many of the last were ruined forever because the little kind deeds and words that would have helped them to repentance were withheld. And she resolved in her kind heart to be particularly careful, and gently and kindly encourage to the right those who seemed leaning towards the evil in life — a noble resolve, which she faithfully kept, and which was the means of working much good in the world.

"And now," exclaimed Johnstone, "I shall soon be married."

"To whom, pray?" cried his eager listeners.

"To Marion — Miss Grey."

Mrs. Hyde was surprised and delighted, for Miss Grey had been Nettie's governess for three years, and they all loved her dearly. She had left them to go west six months before, to live with an aunt who had sent her an urgent entreaty. Lately the Hydcs had not heard from her.

"My dear Marion! I am so delighted! Mr. Johnstone, you have won a treasure, and she a noble husband. But tell me how it came about."

And then Johnstone told a little romance connected with his life. He had known Miss Grey from his boyhood, and had always loved her. But, when he fell into evil company and began his wrong-doings, she had told him never to see her again, unless he repented and reformed. He had never forgotten his love for her, but, since his western life began, had worked night and day to repair the wrong he had done. He had repaid the bank money, bought his farm, built a house and furnished it, and then, with a spotless

record of his new life, had gone to the honorable girl who always truly loved him, and was now more proud and trustful of him than if he had never done wrong, and so nobly repented and retrieved his faults.

"You must be married from here, Johnstone," exclaimed Mr. Hyde, "and I wish you both, warmly, the happy, honorable life you both deserve."

And then it was all arranged that the wedding was to take place from the house where Miss Grey had spent three happy years.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT OF THOUGHTLESSNESS.

NETTIE'S parents did not question her about her adventure at the ferry. They expected a full confession from her, and Nettie knew it, and trembled with fear and shame, and could not make up her mind to reveal her deceitfulness.

Mrs. Hyde had waited for some time in the evening, making frequent little errands to Nettie's room, and giving the child every chance to begin her confession. But Nettie did not speak of it, although she knew very well it was what her mother waited for. At last Mrs. Hyde said, "I am going now, Nettie," and bent above her bed, with a grave, expectant face.

But Nettie threw away this chance of a peaceful night.

"I can't tell you to-night, mamma, but I will to-morrow."

"Good night, then, my dear," answered her mother, with a gentle sigh.

Nettie flung her arms around her mother's neck, and kissed her again and again. Mrs. Hyde knew the conflict that was going on within her daughter's breast. She pitied Nettie in her struggle with right and wrong, but thought it best for the child, on this occasion, to say nothing, but let the fault be confessed voluntarily. So she did not speak again, but stood beside the bed, gently smoothing back the child's dark hair, and clasping her with a loving embrace.

Presently Mr. Hyde's voice was heard calling for her.

"I must go now, my dear," said she, gently, leaving Nettie, with a fond mother's kiss.

"Mamma, mamma, won't you come back

again?" called the child, contrite now, and wishing to confess and be forgiven.

"If I can," answered the mother. But she could not for some time, and then Nettie had fallen into a troubled sleep.

"Poor little daughter!" sighed her mother, bending tenderly over her, and kissing away the tears still trickling over the flushed cheeks of the sleeper. "This is bitter experience for you, my poor Nettie, and I fear your hasty, impulsive spirit will have to bear much more, unless you learn to trust to Him who alone can guide and control you."

Then she knelt beside her child, and prayed the good Father to guard especially this wayward lamb, and lead her safe to the fold.

Was it the influence of her mother's prayer that made Nettie sleep more peacefully? Perhaps so; for, as the good mother rose from her knees, the child's sobs ceased, and a quiet look stole over her face. With another loving kiss her mother left her, and sought her own room.

Mrs. Hyde had been quite ill with a low fever, and had been about but a few days. She was still far from being strong, and the shock of seeing Nettie brought home as she had been, all dripping wet, and white and shivery, had startled her greatly. In the night she was severely ill, and threatened with a return of the fever.

How much happier Nettie would have been had she not put off the confession of her fault!

Early in the morning, while the light was dim, and long, black shadows still lay in the dark corners of her room, she was awakened by one of the servants, who kept saying over and over, —

"Wake up, Miss Nettie; wake up?"

"What is it, Ann? What is the matter?" asked the bewildered child, sitting up in bed, and rubbing her eyes, sleepily.

"It is this, Miss Nettie: your dear mamma is like to die."

"What!" cried Nettie, thoroughly awake

now, and more astonished and terror-stricken. "Mamma going to die! How dare you say that, Ann? You're crazy."

"I wish I was," cried Ann, wringing her hands, and bursting into tears: "any ways, your mamma asked for you, and the doctor told me to fetch you; and they *dò* say, Miss Nettie, that her being so ill is all your fault in frightening her so last night."

Nettie sprang out of bed, and throwing a shawl about her, rushed, distractedly, to her mother's room. Her father met her at the threshold.

"Papa, papa," she cried, flinging herself into his arms, "what do they mean by frightening me so? I want to see mamma!"

"My darling, you must be quiet; you cannot see mamma unless you are perfectly calm. She is very ill, possibly in danger; at any rate, she cannot bear the excitement of seeing you, unless you are quiet."

"I will be quiet, then," Nettie exclaimed, with a great effort controlling herself.

"That's my brave little girl!" said the father, kindly. "I hear mamma's voice, asking for you; are you ready to go in to her now, my dear?"

Nettie went into the room, and saw her dear mother lying so white and still, with closed eyes, that it seemed almost as if she were dead.

"O, mamma," cried the child, softly, "how you must have suffered! Can you forgive me, dear, dear mamma?"

The mother's eyes opened with a look of love so tender, forgiving, and confiding, that the penitent child, almost heart-broken as she was at the time, never forgot it.

"I am afraid I make you worse, mamma, and I know I made you ill," she sobbed. "Do get well, dear mamma, and I *will* be a better child!"

"I know you will, darling," the mother answered, with a trustful, loving smile. "You must be good, for baby's sake."

"Yes, mamma; yes, I will, truly. Only get well!"

"I am better now, dear."

The doctor then said Nettie must go, and, after kissing her mother and repeating her promise, she went back to her own room.

"Now I *must* turn over a new leaf," said she to herself, while dressing. "I'm an elder sister now, and must begin at once setting a good example, so as to get used to it by the time baby begins to notice things. I wish mamma wouldn't put off naming her till Eric gets home. I wonder what we'll call her? Not any such outlandish name as Anneita, I *do* hope. Perhaps I can choose her name. Let's see: Alice Maud Mary? No; I forgot Alice was the baby's name that died before I was born, and Mary is too common. Maud's pretty enough. I guess I'll decide on — Ann, stop thumping on my door. What do you want?"

"I've a note for you, Miss Nettie," replied the housemaid, interrupting the important

decision of baby's name, for at the magical word "note," Nettie's door-lock sprang back with a click, and the missive was eagerly grasped. Tearing it open, Nettie read, —

"MY DEAR NETTIE:

"For pity's sake bring back Tom's hat! It was his best one, and bran new. He's making an awful row. Do send it back at once, before he tells my father. In haste, your dear friend,

"LAURA CARMICHAEL."

"What in the world shall I do?" cried poor Nettie, in consternation. "Is any one waiting for an answer, Ann?"

"Yes, miss, the man that brought the note."

Nettie hurried to her writing desk, and hastily scribbled a reply: —

"DEAR LAURA:

"I'm sorry to say that the hat is at the

bottom of East River. I fell in at the ferry, and was almost drowned. Hasn't Tom got another hat? If he can wear an old one for a few days, I'll save up my pocket money and buy him a new one.

"Yours, with love,

"NETTIE HYDE."

Giving this to Ann, and requesting her, rather rudely, to "hurry up," and not "dawdle," Nettie hurriedly finished dressing, and gained the breakfast-room just as the bell rang.

"Papa," she began, in her usual breathless and impulsive way, "how much money did you put in the bank for me yesterday?"

"Three dollars," answered her father.

"Well, I want you to take it out again to-day."

"My dear child, I shall do no such thing."

"But, papa, I *must* have it."

"For what?"

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"To get a tall hat like yours. I want to buy one."

At this announcement her father looked bewildered, and an amused laugh sounded from the bay window, where, turning, Nettie saw the stranger gentleman who had rescued her at the ferry. Instantly she recognized him.

"Why, Mr. Johnstone, was it you who pulled me out of the water? I am very thankful to you?"

"Yes," he answered, taking her extended hand; "but how unfortunate that I did not save the hat!" And then he laughed again, saying, "How comically you looked!"

"What was it?" inquired Mr. Hyde.

And then the whole story of the misspent afternoon came out.

Mr. Hyde was greatly displeased with Nettie. He instantly forbade her to make another visit to Brooklyn or elsewhere without her mother's permission, and declared that Laura's influence seemed to be all evil,

and that Nettie must have nothing more to do with her.

"Very well, papa," said poor Nettie, with tearful eyes ; and as she took her mother's seat to turn out the coffee, she thought herself very harshly treated in being reproved before Mr. Johnstone, on the very day, too, on which she had made so many good resolutions.

CHAPTER IV.

LILLIE HALL.

LILLIE HALL, to whom Laura assigned the rôle of Eva, because of her long, fair hair, was one of Nettie's schoolmates, and her fancied rival. Poor, silly Nettie! She was too much blinded by dislike and jealousy to see the truth — that Lillie was a sweet-tempered, lovely girl, and Laura rude, false, and ill-behaved.

Laura lost no opportunity to increase the ill-feeling between the two; everything disagreeable that she could remember or invent was repeated to Nettie, and ascribed to poor, innocent Lillie, until at last the breach of ill-feeling was so wide that Nettie and Lillie would not speak together. This, as

they sat at the same desk and stood side by side in their classes, was of course very awkward for both.

Lillie grieved over the loss of Nettie's friendship in secret for a long while, and then she resolved to tell her mother all about it, and ask her advice.

Mrs. Hall always took great interest in all Lillie's friendships and school affairs, and on the afternoon of Nettie's adventure at the ferry, had herself opened the subject of Lillie's grievance, by asking how it was that she never saw Nettie Hyde, now, at the house.

Lillie replied, "O, mamma, that is just what I wanted to speak to you about. Nettie and I used to be such dear friends! but since Laura Carmichael came to our school she has turned Nettie against me, and now we do not even speak."

"I am very sorry for that, Lillie," said Mrs. Hall. "Nettie is a warmhearted, attractive girl, but impulsive and easily in-

fluenced. I fear Laura's friendship will not benefit her. But how came she so easily estranged from you?"

"It was about our rank in the classes," answered Lillie: "we were both number one last month, as we are now; but Nettie thinks I deceived Miss Abbott, and gave in a wrong report. Nettie went out in the hall to sharpen her slate pencil, and Miss Abbott gave me permission to speak to Helen Floyd. Nettie came back to her seat while I was whispering. She looked surprised, but said nothing until after school, when I reported 'perfect;' then she accused me before all the school of cheating."

"Did you explain, dear, that you had Miss Abbott's permission to speak?" asked Mrs. Hall, gently.

"No, mamma," replied Lillie, reddening. "I thought, if Nettie chose to condemn me without a hearing, I would not attempt to justify myself."

"Then, my dear, I consider that you are

more to blame in this case than Nettie, for she has an excuse, in that she believed you guilty of fraud, whereas, with you, merely injured pride stands in the way."

"But, mamma," exclaimed Lillie, rather hurt by her mother's judgment, "Nettie has known me all my life, and we have always before been intimate. Don't you think it too bad that she should treat me so?"

"Yes, dear, it certainly is unkind, and I am surprised that she should so hastily condemn you without waiting to hear your explanations; but as I said before, Nettie is, unfortunately, very impulsive, and I can easily understand how her indignation at your supposed deceit, and Laura's influence against you, would lead her to act as she has."

"Lillie," exclaimed Freddy Hall, entering with a note, "here's an invitation, or something or other, I suppose. That little scarlet monkey, Laura Carmichael calls 'our page,' left it."

Lillie took the note, laughing at Freddy's

description of the Carmichaels' liveried servant. "It's an invitation to act the part of Eva in a play, mamma; but I don't think I care about having anything to do with Laura."

"I hope you do not care for the play, Lillie. I should not like you to take part in one. I do not at all approve of theatricals for children."

"Unless you were willing, of course I should not enjoy it, mamma; but, at any rate, I will decline Laura's invitation."

"I guess you'd better," burst in Freddy. "Do you know, Lill, I was walking home from school to-day behind Laura Carmichael and a whole lot of girls, and she was talking about this thing. I heard her say, —

"'I don't like Lillie Hall, but I've got to ask her because her hair is just right.'"

"Then Helen Floyd said, —

"'But, Laura, what will Nettie Hyde say?'"

"And Laura's reply was, with a horrid laugh, —

"O, I'll manage Nettie; I'll tell her that if she doesn't come I'll ask Lillie; and when she's once there she can't help herself;' and then she went on boasting, 'I can make Nettie Hyde do anything in the world for me: all I've got to do is to say, Well, I'll have Lillie Hall for my friend, or I've got *such* a secret, and I'll tell Lillie Hall; and Nettie is so afraid I will, that she gives up to me right off.'

"Well, mamma and Lillie, you'd better believe I was mad! and I was just going to give Laura such a piece of my mind, when Helen Floyd spoke up.

"Laura, you ought to be dreadfully ashamed of yourself. Lillie and Nettie are the two best girls in school, and they have always been good friends till you came here. It's a pity Nettie is so silly as to believe you, and I do hope she'll find you out; but as for Lillie, I don't believe she would listen to your secrets, and I'm sure she wouldn't have you for her friend.'

"'That's so, Miss Helen,' said I, 'and I'm much obliged to you for defending my sister.'

"Then Laura cried out, —

"'O, what a mean boy you are, Fred Hall!'

"And I answered, —

"'I don't know of any one more capable of judging meanness than yourself, Miss Laura.' And then I came home."

Here, catching up the note, the excited lad rushed into the entry, and down upon the frightened little scarlet messenger. Tossing him the note, he cried, —

"There, you little rascal, take that back, and tell Miss Laura that my sister won't have anything to do with her, or any of her trash."

The red-clad page darted away with a broad grin on his frightened face, and Freddy returned to the parlor.

"O, Freddy," exclaimed Lillie, laughing, "what a message you sent off in my name!"

"You shouldn't have done so, Freddy," said his mother, reprovingly. "It was very

rude. Lillie could have quietly declined the invitation, and let the matter drop. You have made your sister appear very unlady-like."

"I'm sorry, mamma, but I couldn't help it: I was awfully mad; and you can't want Lillie to toady to such a set of snobs as the Carmichaels."

"Freddy!"

"Mamma, I can't help using slang; all the fellows do."

"You must help it, my son; it is very displeasing to papa and me."

"I know it," responded Freddy, "and I do try not to; but every once in a while it will slip out."

"That is because you have acquired the habit; and every time you allow yourself to encourage it, it becomes harder to break."

"But, after all, mamma, you haven't answered my question."

"You haven't forgotten our rule, Freddy: that answers it."

"Do right,
And be polite!"

sang Lillie. "That's it, Fred."

And that was the principle upon which Mrs. Hall's large family of children were educated — first of all, to do right; and as a natural grace, to be kindly and gentle.

"And now, Lillie, dear," said the mother, returning to the subject they had been discussing, "suppose you try a new plan with Nettie. What if you write her a note, explaining the truth of your apparent infringement of the school-room rules, and, after the explanation, invite her to spend the afternoon and take tea with us."

"Thank you, mamma," said Lillie, brightly; "that is a very nice plan, and I must follow it out. I do love Nettie dearly, and long to be friends with her again."

"And I want you should, too, Lill," interposed Freddy. "I suppose Eric will be home before long, and he's just the jolliest fellow I know. And now, my dear sis,

I want you to help me about my examples," he added, persuasively.

Lillie had intended to drive out with her mother, and really wished to go; but she knew Freddy was working hard to be advanced in his class, and that these examples were his especial stumbling-blocks. Her clearer ideas of mathematical rules and their application could readily grasp and remove those obstacles that seemed to Freddy as fixed as the pyramids of Egypt; and Lillie was too generous to refuse him aid while he strove for so worthy an object. So the sweet-tempered girl gave up her pleasure for Freddy's benefit; and her brother's grateful smile, and hearty, "Thank you, Lillie; you're the best girl in the world!" amply repaid her.

"I wonder why I'm so happy," she thought to herself, when her mother went up to dress for the drive, not knowing it was because she had been kind and unselfish, and her heart was full of the blessing

bestowed on all who follow the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Mrs. Hall, coming home a couple of hours afterwards, saw the two working busily over the last sum, their cheeks flushed, brows knitted, and dark and light hair mingling, as the two heads pressed close together in eager absorption.

They did not notice her presence in the room, and she stood quietly at the window, drawing off her gloves, waiting for them to finish.

"Five, and carry two," said Fred; "seven, eleven, nineteen — nine, and carry one; ten, nineteen, twenty-seven, thirty-two —"

"No, no, Freddy; twenty-seven and seven?"

"O, how stupid, to be sure! thirty-four; and nine are forty-three, and eight are fifty-one. There! that *is* the last one — isn't it?"

"But look at it, Freddy; it isn't quite done."

"O, to be sure, I haven't brought down my fractions. Forty-nine sixty-thirds and seventy-seven ninety-firsts ; now, Lillie, there isn't a number in the world that will divide those two atrocious fractions."

"Isn't there, Freddy? Try seven."

Freddy's pencil was busy instantly.

"That's it, Lillie ; how splendidly quick you are to see ! Four thousand two hundred and ninety and seven ninths the first day, and five thousand one hundred and ninety-five and eleven thirteenths the next."

"And your denomination, Freddy?"

"Square inches," he answered, writing it rapidly.

"There ! every one done and proved. I thank you so much, dear Lillie ! You're the best girl that ever lived, and I'm going to save up all my money, and take you to the Museum. Why, hollo ! mamma. I didn't know you came in.. Did you have a good time?"

"Yes, dear, I did," said his mother ; "and

I came home early to let Lillie and you have the carriage. You both look flushed and tired, and I mean to let you have a nice drive: so run for your garments, and tell Jackson he may drive you wherever you like to go, for the rest of the afternoon."

"O, thank you, mamma!" they cried, and flew off to prepare for the ride; for theirs was a very large family, and Lillie and Freddy, being the youngest, could not often have the carriage; so this occasion was a great treat.

CHAPTER V.

THE FALSEHOOD.

WHEN Nettie started for school, her father accompanied her, intending to see Laura, and learn from her where he could find her brother.

Just as they turned off Fifth Avenue, in the direction of Miss Abbott's school, a young man was seen rapidly approaching them.

"Papa," exclaimed Nettie, shrinking behind him, "that is Thomas Carmichael."

Mr. Hyde accosted the young man, showed him Laura's note, and explained Nettie's accident, and his own intentions.

The young man read the note in a bewildered way; then his face grew very red, as he exclaimed, —

"Mr. Hyde, there is some strange mistake. I haven't spoken to Laura about a hat of any description, and I have my hat on my head; so this seems a complete mystery. Will you allow me to keep this note, and I will question Laura?"

Then he resumed his rapid walk, and Mr. Hyde gravely continued on his way to the school. Nettie did not know what to make of it.

Laura's statement and Tom's were certainly conflicting.

Presently Mr. Hyde spoke.

"Nettie, say nothing of this meeting with Thomas to Laura. If she speaks of the hat, you can say that I will replace it at once, if she will send him to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered Nettie.

Then she stopped at the school steps — which they had by this time reached, — and whispered in his ear, —

"Papa, will you please forgive me for dis-

obeying and displeasing mamma, and tell her how sorry I am?"

"I will, my dear; and I heartily forgive you, if you are sorry for your fault; but I cannot conceal from you that I am deeply grieved by your impulsive heedlessness, and, above all, by your deceit. You are shocked by Laura's falsehood; but, my dear Nettie, what shall we call your excuse to mamma yesterday?"

"O, papa, I did not mean to tell an actual falsehood."

"There it is, Nettie—the false reasoning you have lately acquired. I cannot leave you so, my little girl: take your books into school, and ask Miss Abbott to excuse you for a while; then you may walk to the office with me."

Nettie went in with the books, and the troubled father waited at the door. He was startled by Nettie's remark, "*an actual falsehood.*" He could not bear to think for an instant that she was learning to prevaricate.

He knew to what that sin inevitably led, and he resolved that she should at once come to a proper understanding of its falsity.

Mr. Hyde believed that children often were led into wrong because they did not clearly understand the difference between wrong and right. Sometimes he thought the fault lay with the parents who tried to keep their children in the right by fear of punishment ; and sometimes with the children, who would not strive against the wrong.

He thought it every parent's duty to teach the child *to do right for the sake of right, and to love to do right*. But here was his little Nettie, who had been so taught, turning to falsehood ; and, waiting for her that morning, the father was a very unhappy man.

Nettie came out presently, and went with him to the office, where, seated in his private room, he began to question her.

"Now, darling, tell papa what you mean by an actual falsehood."

"What I said yesterday, papa. I told

mamma that I must practise and write a composition. And I did practise."

"Stop a minute, Nettie. You told mamma you '*must*;' there was the first wrong statement. You know you were not *obliged* to give up the drive when you intended to go to Brooklyn."

"Yes, sir," said Nettie, meekly.

"Then that was a falsehood."

"O, papa!"

"My dear, can you say it was not?"

Nettie was silent.

"Then, as to the practising. How many times did you play your lesson?"

"Twice."

"And the composition, Nettie; was it required of you yesterday?"

"No, papa; not for two weeks."

"And now, dear," he continued, — grieved at the pain he was inflicting upon his daughter, — "what did you mean mamma to think?"

"That I was at home studying," exclaimed poor Nettie, bursting into tears.

"I want you to listen, dear," said the kind father, gently. "You told three falsehoods, and acted two more; for besides deceiving mamma, you deceived yourself, and that is the most dangerous practice in the world. But, Nettie, there is One you cannot deceive — the good Lord. How do you think He looks at your faults, my child?"

"O, papa," sobbed Nettie, "how dreadfully wicked I have been! I did not know it. I did not think of it so. Indeed, papa, I did not."

"I knew it, my darling," said the father, drawing her into his lap. "I was sure you did not realize the sins you were committing. We will ask for the Lord's forgiveness, and then, my child, with this experience, I am sure you will learn to be candid and truthful to yourself."

Then, in the heart of that busy city, with

the rumble and racket of the street below sounding in their ears, the father and daughter knelt together in the office, and Mr. Hyde prayed for the grace of truth for his child. Nettie's contrite heart pleaded with her father's for forgiveness, for the love of truth, and for goodness, for the Redeemer's sake.

And afterwards the busy noises in the street below were as loud as ever; but a strange, sweet sense of peace and quiet came over the two, and in the heavy trial that was to follow it, Nettie's penitent prayer with her father was the greatest of consolations to the stricken family.

"Now, dear," said Mr. Hyde, dismissing Nettie with a fond kiss, "you may go back to school. You had better ride, it is so late. John is in the front room; he can go out with you and stop a coach. I shall write to Eric this morning to tell him we want him at home. Have you any message?"

"My best love," answered Nettie, "and I

miss him dreadfully, and wish he would come back."

"When I have written, I shall go back to mamma," continued Mr. Hyde.

"Please tell her," said Nettie, softly, "that you have forgiven me, and I have asked the Lord to help me, and I shall trust more in Him and less in myself, now."

"Mamma will be pleased indeed," was her father's reply; and as Nettie went out he looked fondly after her, little dreaming how a few short hours would change his darling's life.

CHAPTER VI.

LAURA'S TEMPER.

IT was nearly recess time when Nettie reached school. Lillie Hall had laid a note upon her desk, and as it was addressed to her, Nettie opened and read it.

It was a pleading little note. Nettie was quite touched. She rapidly pencilled an answer.

"DEAR LILLIE :

"I am so glad you wrote ! Please forgive my doubting you. I should have asked about it, but Laura said Miss Abbott did not give you permission. Baby is *such* a darling ! You must come and see her, Lillie. With my dear, dear love,

"NETTIE."

She gave the note to Lillie, and at recess the two "made up," as the other girls said, and were warmer friends than before their difference occurred.

Laura's influence over Nettie was now removed. She knew nothing of it as yet, however. She had failed so badly in history that Miss Abbott required her to write her lesson out at recess, and it was not until after school that she learned how matters stood.

When they were dismissed she hurried after Nettie, exclaiming, —

"I hope you were only joking in your note."

"About what?" asked Nettie, coolly.

"That unfortunate hat, of course."

"I told you the truth; I fell into the ferry, and was nearly drowned."

"But couldn't you get the hat again?" persisted Laura, with the sublimest indifference to Nettie's danger.

"I don't know; nobody thought of the

hat, I suppose," said Nettie, laconically. "But papa told me to tell you if Tom would call at his office and get the money, he would replace the hat."

"He can't call at the office," said Laura, peevishly; "he's sick, and can't go about. What a mess you've made of things, Nettie Hyde!"

"Well, I suppose papa can call at the house and see him," said Nettie.

They were standing now at the top of the flight of stone steps. Helen Floyd and Lillie Hall were coming down from the school-room, and heard Nettie's remark and Laura's reply.

"I tell you he is sick, and can't see any one."

"Who's sick, Laura?" asked Helen.

"My brother Tom."

"Why, I saw him talking to Mr. Hyde and Nettie before school this morning. He didn't look very ill, but I thought he must





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be very angry about something. I heard him say he should 'question Laura,'"

"Nettie Hyde, you mean little tell-tale!" cried Laura, angrily, turning upon Nettie, and giving her a violent shove.

Nettie was standing on the extreme edge of the upper step. Laura's weight made her lose her balance; she slipped, and fell the whole length of the flight, and down upon the stone pavement.

"O, Laura, Laura! What have you done!"

With a cry of alarm Helen and Lillie sprang after her, and Miss Abbott, aroused by their startled voices, hurried to the spot.

Nettie lay insensible. There was an ugly cut upon the side of her head, and a bad bruise on her forehead; her face was bathed in blood.

"Poor child!" said Miss Abbott, bending tenderly over her; "what a terrible fall! Helen, go for a carriage; and, Lillie, run up to the school-room for some water."

The two girls flew off to do her bidding. The water partially revived Nettie; she moaned, as if in great pain.

Quite a crowd had now collected around the scene of the accident, and among them was a doctor, who, after one look at Nettie's poor bruised head, bound up the bleeding wound, and asked Miss Abbott where she should be taken.

"I will carry her," he added; "the motion of the carriage might do her irreparable injury."

Fortunately the house was close at hand, and the kind physician easily bore her to it.

Lillie Hall followed them, first sending Helen with a message to her mother.

"Nettie's mother is very ill, sir," she said to the doctor, with kind thoughtfulness.

"I am very glad you told me," he answered; "I will be careful that she is not alarmed."

"You had better stay with this poor child

a while if you can," he added. "We may want you."

"Yes, sir, I have sent for my mother, too. This is the house." Lillie ran up the steps, and pulled the bell.

Mr. Hyde, who was just about to leave the house, opened the door himself, and saw, with a vague feeling of some dire calamity, his little daughter, insensible and covered with blood, in a stranger's arms. His first thought was, that the child was dead; and indeed the drooping head, and slender, listless arms, so devoid of life, seemed too like death. But poor Nettie, though powerless to speak or move, was conscious of pain, and the first low moan that sounded from her white lips drew her father to her side.

Taking her from the young doctor's arms, he carried her to the library, the quietest room in the house, and, upon Lillie's whispering that the stranger was a physician, requested him to follow. Not another word

spoke the stricken father; but pressing the sufferer close against his heart, and guarding, even in that agonizing moment, the poor, sick mother in the room above, he laid Nettie upon the bed that was hastily prepared for her, and awaited the physician's movements.

Mrs. Hall had now arrived, and immediately took charge of things. Nettie's clothes were removed, the blood was tenderly washed from her poor, bruised head and face, and then she was carefully laid in the bed, and the father and doctor were recalled. The latter made a second examination.

"Mr. Hyde," said he, suddenly, "is there any physician in town in whom you have great confidence?"

Mr. Hyde replied that he knew nothing of the merits of New York physicians, but named the one attending his wife, and asked if he thought a consultation necessary.

"Yes," said the young doctor, frankly, "I consider this a very critical case;" and

he explained to the unhappy father that the injuries the child had sustained in her head might, and probably would, be productive of a most terrible misfortune. He then wrote on a card the names of two eminent physicians connected with the hospitals, and requested Mr. Hyde to send for them, and also for his own family physician.

Mrs. Hall was busily engaged in applying ice-cold bandages to Nettie's head; Lillie was waiting, sorrowful and anxious, in the parlor; the doctor was preparing bandages for Mrs. Hall; and the poor father hung over his darling one, powerless to help her, and cut to the soul by every plaintive moan from the sufferer's white lips.

A carriage drove rapidly to the door. A handsome boy's head and shoulders were thrust eagerly out, and a gentleman's face looked forth, as joyous and almost as eager as the lad's. The vehicle stopped at the door. The lad sprang forth with a glad shout, when Lillie darted out, exclaiming, —

"O, Eric, be careful! your mother — Nettie —"

"Eh! what?" cried Eric, stopping in surprise. "O, Lillie Hall, what *is* the matter?" for Lillie's white face and trembling lips betokened disaster.

"Your mother is very ill, and Nettie has just been dreadfully hurt. You can go in, Eric; she is in the library; but, Eric, she — she won't know you." And a burst of tears came to Lillie's relief.

Dr. Ward, Eric's uncle, the gentleman who was in the carriage with him, also heard Lillie's sorrowful news.

"This is a sad coming home to you, Eric," he said, looking pityingly upon the lad's face, whose expression had changed from eager joy to sudden anguish, — "a sad coming home! I ought to have written."

Eric did not reply, but followed his uncle to the room where Nettie lay.

Only Dr. Ward was admitted, however.

The surgeons had arrived, and were holding their consultation over the case.

Eric sat down on the lower step of the stairs in the hall close to the study door. He buried his face in his hands, poor lad, and tried to think of what he had heard, but was too much bewildered by the suddenness of the shock to remember clearly anything but his great disappointment in finding sickness and perhaps death in the home he had longed so eagerly to reach, and where he had expected such a joyous welcome.

As he sat in silence there, a little shrill cry sounded from the room above, breaking in upon his rambling thoughts. Eric started suddenly, and hearing it again, got up quickly, and went up the stairs to his mother's room. Passing within it, he saw the dear mother looking pale and anxious, as she lay wearily back among the pillows.

"Eric, I am so glad!" she said, faintly. "I heard the noise down stairs, and was afraid something had happened." She ex-

tended her arms, and Eric rushed into them. He had not seen his mother for a year.

"My dear, dear boy!" she exclaimed, kissing him fondly. "How you have grown! and you look so strong and well! Is uncle Charlie with you?"

"Yes, mamma; but you must not talk. You are not well, you know."

"Nurse," said Mrs. Hyde to the attendant, "bring baby here. Eric, you must see your little sister."

The lad's face flushed with joy. He had never seen the baby, and looked at her now with a curious mixture of astonishment and affection.

"Isn't she a mite!" he exclaimed at length, with admiring glances. "I must give her a kiss. Are you afraid of your big brother, baby?"

"Indeed, Master Eric, she is not," the nurse replied, with an undisguised look of pride at the handsome, healthy boy, and another at the little babe in her arms: "and

now, Master Eric," she continued, in a whisper, "you had better go, for you might tire your mamma."

"Nurse says I must go, mamma," Eric said, kneeling beside her; "but I'll come in again when you've had a nap."

The mother smiled fondly, and, putting an arm around his neck, drew his face close to hers.

"Let me look into your eyes, Eric. I want to see if my own brave, honest, truthful boy has come back. Yes," she added, as the lad's dark eyes looked straight into hers with loving trust. "You are my own good boy. I am so glad you have returned, dear, on Nettie's account! She will be lonely without me, while I am lying here; and you must be very kind and gentle with her, Eric: keep her with you as much as you can."

"Yes, mamma," he replied, forcing back his tears, and not permitting a sigh to arouse the mother's fears or suspicion.

"Nettie is such a darling child, we have loved her, and petted her so, and I have been with her so continually, that in my sickness it has been a very hard trial, to think I must lie quietly for weeks, perhaps, and let my child's life drift away into dangerous currents. And now I am ill again. But I have just prayed for her guidance, Eric, and, as if in answer to my prayer, you have come. Take care of your sister now, my boy, and if mamma never gets well, if mamma dies, you must take care of dear Nettie always, and your new little sister too, and poor papa."

"Yes," whispered Eric, afraid to trust his voice, and covering her hand with kisses. "Yes, yes, mamma; but you must get well. You will be well, dear mamma!"

"I hope so," she said, cheerfully. Then, after a moment's silence, she added, "Have you seen Nettie?"

"No, mamma," answered Eric, trembling with fear of the next question.

But his mother merely said, "I thought school must be done ; the mornings are very long."

"They will go fast enough when you are well again," Eric returned, trying to speak cheerfully. "Now I must go ; good by, dear mamma ; get well as fast as you can. Uncle Charlie will soon have you all right."

He went down to the library again : there the doctors were still in consultation, and his father was with them.

"O, Nettie, my poor, bright, darling Nettie !" he muttered, sadly, as a sense of her great suffering stole over him ; for Eric truly loved his sister. He thought upon her bright, winning ways, her little caressing attentions to him, and the free and happy spirit which made her always so merry-hearted ; of her pretty, smiling face, looking out upon him, with roguish delight, from some unexpected place ; and of all her good-natured and charming ways of doing mischief, and her sincere contrition for it afterwards.

He pitied her so, and longed to be able to speak some soothing, comforting words to her!

And his mother, would she die? O, she *must* not; she *could* not, he thought; and then a prayer arose from his heart, and found words from his lips, pleading, loving words, that the Lord would give the mother and sister health, strength, and happiness for the dear Saviour's sake. A while after he found Lillie and Mrs. Hall in the parlor. Lillie was telling her mother how it all happened, and Eric heard the story. His eyes flashed wrath and indignation, as Laura's conduct was related.

"The deceitful, cowardly thing!" he cried, passionately. "If she was only a boy, I'd kill her!"

"Ah, Eric, Eric," said Mrs. Hall, gently, "would you commit a sin like Laura's, in order to punish her?"

Eric turned crimson with shame.

"Forgive us our trespasses," murmured Mrs. Hall. "You know the rest, Eric."

"Yes, ma'am, and I'll try to forgive her; but it will be terribly hard, unless Nettie gets well," said Eric, with an effort.

"It is always hard to forgive an injury; but there was One who freely forgave those who caused his suffering even unto death."

"Mamma," said Lillie, "I am so glad I wrote the note to dear Nettie! It will always make me happy to think of that."

A hurried step sounded through the hall, rapidly drawing nearer and nearer to the parlor door.

A well-known voice exclaimed, "Eric, my dear boy!" and, with a joyful cry of, "Papa, papa!" Eric was folded in his father's arms.

The next welcome words were, "Nettie is better. You may go in and see her."

CHAPTER VII.

LAURA IS CONQUERED.

WHEN Laura saw Nettie fall, she stood, for an instant, shocked and dreadfully startled, gazing at the poor child, lying all huddled up on the sidewalk, white and bleeding; then, amid the accusing voices of her schoolmates, and with indistinct ideas of being pursued by the police and taken to prison, she rushed down the steps, and flew towards the ferry, pushing and jostling the busy people in the streets, until all paused to look after the excited girl, wondering where she was going in such breathless haste. But Laura only hurried on. Once she threw a startled glance behind her, and in that swift instant saw a policeman turning the corner,

and coming towards her. With a thrill of terror, she redoubled her speed, and, rushing frantically forward, came violently in contact with her brother Thomas, who was also on his way to the ferry, but in a more dignified and leisurely manner.

Laura, still with terrified visions of the policemen, imagined Thomas to be one, and, as he caught her arm to detain her, twisted away from him, exclaiming, —

“I didn’t do it; I didn’t.”

“Laura!” he exclaimed.

“O, Tom, I thought you were a policeman. Tom, there is one coming after me. O, hurry home!”

“Laura, what *do* you mean?”

“Just what I say; for pity’s sake, hurry!” and she fairly dragged the young man to the ferry.

“Now, Laura,” said he, as they reached the boat, “you must tell me what you mean. I insist upon knowing.”

“A girl at school fell down the steps, and

got dreadfully hurt — killed, I fear," answered Laura, with a shudder; "and the other girls say I pushed her down."

"Did you?"

"No," said Laura, falsely.

"Who was the unfortunate child?"

"Nettie Hyde."

Thomas gave his sister a quick, keen glance of inquiry, and seeing her flush with fear and shame, said, gravely, —

"Laura, I fear you did have something to do with her fall. Do not be afraid to tell me the truth. I will stand by you, dear."

He was not used to speaking so kindly to her, and Laura looked up in surprise.

The truth was, that Thomas was greatly pained by the falsehoods in Laura's note to Nettie. He was studying for the ministry, and had heretofore been continually from home, seeing little and knowing less of Laura's character; and had supposed her a good girl; rather rude, but still good. All the morning he had grieved over the sudden

discovery he had made that his little sister was so deceitful, and he remembered with a pang of conscience that he had taken very little interest in her, and while he might have done her a great deal of good by kind words of advice, those words had never been spoken. He now resolved to make Laura love him, and to lead her to a love of truth.

While she looked up, surprised by his kind interest, he smiled, and said, —

"Well, dear, you're not afraid of your big brother?"

"No, Tom; you are very good," she answered, and was just on the point of telling the whole truth, when a voice interrupted.

"Thomas, I am glad to see you taking care of your sister for once. Come here, Laura; what in the world were you racing down Broadway for just now?"

It was Mrs. Carmichael, leaning from her carriage, and looking very much displeased.

Laura reddened, and, glancing up, caught sight of the policeman who had frightened

her before. She had felt safe with her brother; but now, as she saw the officer hurrying towards the ferry, her fear returned, and her face grew deadly pale.

"Mércy! What is the matter, child? You have run yourself faint. Lift her into the carriage, Tom."

But scarcely had Thomas obeyed, when the officer, who lived in Brooklyn, and was merely hastening home to his dinner, also reached the ferry, and sprang aboard.

Laura shrieked, and clung to Thomas.

"O, save me! save me! Tom, don't let him get me! don't let him see me!"

"Be quiet!" exclaimed her mother. "Be quiet instantly, Laura. What is the matter, Tom?"

"Laura, you are only attracting attention," said her brother, kindly. "The man isn't looking at you."

"What man?" demanded Mrs. Carmichael.

"That police officer."

"Police officer? I don't understand."

Thomas told her what had happened at the school. Mrs. Carmichael listened coldly. She was merely a fashionable woman, and took very little interest in her children's affairs, giving them unlimited supplies of rich clothing and money, and expecting them to be satisfied and happy without troubling her. Laura was her favorite child, being the only girl; but even Laura was put aside with a quiet "Don't be troublesome, child!" whenever she went to her mother for advice or sympathy.

On this occasion, having heard her son through, she seemed rather amused than otherwise.

"How absurd! Of course Laura didn't push her. So you were running from a policeman? You silly child! Don't you know your father's name and wealth would protect you anywhere against such a fancied charge? No one can hurt you, child. Never run through the streets in that hoidenish

way again. You are too old for such rudeness."

Then, turning to Thomas, she continued, in a tone of cold displeasure, —

"I should think that a young man of your professions would have sufficient charity to shield a little child from such terror. Pray, why did you not assure Laura that she had done nothing wrong?"

"Because I feared she had."

"I didn't, I didn't!" sobbed Laura.

"Of course you didn't," said her mother, angrily; "but your brother seems to find pleasure in believing you guilty."

"Mother!" cried Thomas, "how can you? I am deeply grieved about Laura and the falsehoods she has told. Nettie's fall was probably accidental; that is, when Laura pushed, she did not, of course, intend to throw her down the steps. I am sorry to say it, but you cannot believe Laura's statement, and I shall inquire into the matter, of Mr. Hyde and Miss Abbott."

"Indeed, you will do no such thing; I forbid it," exclaimed his mother, angrily. "A nice character you would gain for your sister."

"Well, mother, let me talk to Laura. Perhaps I may induce her to tell the truth. I think she was on the point of confessing to me when you overtook us."

"I will not have the child harassed. Look at her; she is almost ill now. Why should you doubt her word? I should think, Thomas, that a young man of your professions would know that 'charity begins at home.'"

Poor Tom, his profession of Christianity was the wet blanket his mother always threw over all his warm desires to benefit others, or to withstand wrong. It was a great wonder that the young man was not completely discouraged in his efforts to do good to himself and others. He loved his worldly mother, but she constantly threw temptations in his way, to wean him from

the religious life he had chosen, and his one great trial, was the constant conflict between his desire to please her and the wish to be dutiful to the Master he was serving.

He said nothing further about Laura's misconduct at the time, thinking his mother's expressed opinions would have a bad effect upon the child. He was quite satisfied that she had done wrong, on account of the fear she had manifested, and thought a judicious and kind talking to might lead her to see the error of her ways.

Many people, passing them, envied the occupants of the elegant barouche, with its handsome black span, its dignified driver and footman, and the scarlet-liveried page seated behind with folded arms. I suppose a great many little girls wished themselves in Laura's shoes, thinking it a fine thing to be dressed in such grand clothes, and ride about like a fine lady. How those same little girls would have opened their bright

eyes in astonishment if they had only known that Laura was the most unhappy child in all Brooklyn !

Mr. Carmichael was the wealthiest man in the city. His house was the handsomest, its appointments the most expensive, and his horses and carriages the finest that money could buy. His wife and children always had whatever they wanted, if it could be bought, and were envied their rich and costly possessions by all. But Mrs. Carmichael was fretful and sickly, and the children, excepting Thomas, were miserably unhappy little wretches. Elegant things, without a parent's loving, watchful care, will never make a happy home ; and these children sneered at rich possessions, despised their fretful mother, and were afraid of their stern, cross-looking father.

In the nursery Billy, and Dan, and Joe fought like young tigers. Robbie, a year older than Laura, spent all his time out of school in plaguing her, making the babies

cry, and teasing Billy, who would sulk for hours, and actually hated his mischief-loving brothers.

They all loved Tom, but heretofore even Tom had taken very little notice of them. Still, as the "big brother," they regarded him with admiration, from a respectful distance, and the day was marked with a white stone when Tom went into the nursery or took them for a drive.

On the day of Nettie's dreadful accident Robbie came in from school late. He was cross and tired. Luncheon was waiting for him, and at the table sat Billy, Dan, and Joe, and their patient nurse.

"Hallo! Snooks, Poodles and Toodles!" cried Robbie, addressing the three little boys, and giving a jerking pull at each one's hair as he pronounced their nicknames. "Hallo, you little girl-boys; so you're actually out of the nursery for once, eh?" and he gave them each another pull, harder than the first.

Billy's face grew black with wrath: he scowled at his brother, not daring to retaliate, and Dan and Joe began to cry.

"O, Master Robbie," pleaded the tired nurse, "can't you let the children alone? They've been so troublesome all day long, I'm most worn out."

"Wear away, then," retorted the rude boy; "nurses are as plenty as flies in July."

"Deed, then," murmured the poor woman, "you'll not find them so plenty as to stay in this house, you saucy boy!"

"How dare you speak so to me?" cried Robbie. "I'll tell mamma of you instantly. Mother, mother," he screamed up the stairs, "that old nurse is teaching Dan and Joe to call me names."

"She isn't!" screamed the twins.

"She is!"

"She isn't, either!"

"She is, too!"

"Rob's telling lies," cried Billy.

"You shut up!" retorted Robbie, rushing furiously at him.

A fight ensued, Billy and the twins combining against Robbie, who flung out right and left, making the two babies roar with pain.

Mrs. Carmichael had just come in from the carriage: instead of inquiring into the disturbance below, she exclaimed, pcevishly, —

"Tom, for mercy's sake, go down and quiet those children. Laura, go to your luncheon, and don't trouble me with any more nonsense."

The weak-minded woman then went up to her boudoir, thinking her lot very hard in having such noisy, quarrelsome, disobedient children.

Tom and Laura went down stairs to the breakfast-room, where the angry children were scratching, kicking, striking, and pinching each other, with red, passionate faces and wrathful scowls.

"Boys!" exclaimed Tom, reprovingly.
"Robert, come away from Billy."

"He hit me first," cried Robbie, giving his little brother a violent kick.

"I didn't," screamed Billy; "Rob tells the biggest lies!"

"Hush!" cried Tom, sternly; and greatly incensed with Robbie, he gave him a violent shake, which made the young man realize that his brother possessed much more strength than he did. "Now sit down in that chair, and be quiet," said Tom, his anger cooling. "Billy, stop scowling, and take your seat. Danny and Joey, if you won't cry any more, brother Tom will give you a nice ride with Hunter."

"Me, too?" cried Billy, brightening up, while the babies laughed through their tears.

"Yes," said Tom; "Laura, the babies, and you and I; and Robbie may ride with us on his pony."

Robbie looked up sheepishly: he had been afraid his brother would exclude him from

the pleasure party ; but catching Tom's smile, full of love and forgiveness, he started up, and rather disconcerted the young divinity student by giving him a regular school-boy hug, exclaiming, —

"Bully for you, Tom ; you're the best fellow in the world."

The school-boy slang made Tom wince, but he thought best to pass it over.

The lunch that day was a merry one : after it, Tom sent Robbie to order the horses, and asked the nurse to dress Billy and the twins.

He was thus left alone with Laura.

"My dear little sister," said he, kindly, "would you not be more happy if you told me the truth about Nettie's fall, and this note you wrote to her?" He drew her note to Nettie from his pocket, and Laura, remembering the old trouble about the hat, burst into tears.

"O, Tom," she sobbed, "it was father's

hat, and I was afraid of him. He told me not to touch it."

"And now it is lost?"

"Yes. O, dear! what shall I do?"

"We will buy another one this afternoon."

"O, Tom, thank you; you are so good! And, Tom, I did tell a story; I did push Nettie, and I suppose I made her fall; but truly and honestly, I didn't mean to; and I don't know what I shall do, for I'm almost sure it killed her!"

"Perhaps she was not so much hurt as you supposed," said the brother, kindly.

"We will drive over to New York and make inquiries about her. You must tell papa about the hat, and you can explain how Nettie's fall was an accident; though it was very wrong in you to push her. And, Laura, dear, what will become of you if you tell such dreadful stories?"

"Mamma does, too, and Robbie," sobbed Laura.

"You must not say mamma does, Laura,"

said Tom, with a pang of grief. "Little girls do not always understand what is said and done by older people. It is a terrible thing to tell a falsehood, and you never must say mamma does again. I shall talk to Robbie, and tell him how wrong it is; but, Laura, if all the world does wrong, other people's faults do not excuse yours. I want you to ask the Lord to help you in the right way: will you, my little sister?"

"Yes, Tom," Laura whispered, shyly.

Her brother stooped to kiss her, and Laura, throwing her arms around his neck, murmured, —

"You pray for me to-night, Tom. I want to be good, and I will try hard."

How glad the brother's heart was! He did not wait for the night to pray for her. And how easily Laura was conquered, after all! A few kind words, only a few kind words, and from what had they saved her!

How the children enjoyed that ride! Tom's open beach wagon was so much

pleasanter than the velvet-lined barouche! and Hunter was swift and beautiful. Robbie had resolved never to do anything to displease Tom again. Laura was happier than she had been for months, despite her anxiety now for Nettie. Billy's scowl had given place to a beaming smile, and Danny and Joey clapped their hands in glee, admiring, alternately, Hunter and Robbie's pony.

And Tom? He had given up a very pleasant engagement for this afternoon with the children. But he was very happy. When he looked around upon the little faces, from which scowling defiance was now banished by looks of eager delight, he murmured softly to himself, "Mother's proverb is a good one. I will never forget it. 'Charity begins at home.'"

At Mr. Hyde's they learned that Nettie was very much better; that the physicians had reported favorably of the case, and were hopeful of her entire recovery.

Laura's sorrowful, penitent face quite won over Eric. He assured her Nettie should know how badly she felt about the accident, and they would all forgive her for causing it.

Laura was very grateful to him. She left her love for Nettie, and, with a lighter heart, rejoined her brothers. Tom gave her ten dollars to replace her father's hat, and selected one of the right size. Then they went home, and her hardest trial was to come, for Tom insisted upon the confession, and Laura was afraid of her father.

But having promised, she bravely told him all.

And what do you think her father did?

He waited quietly until Laura had told him everything, even about the push that caused Nettie's severe fall, the falsehoods in the note, those to her mother, and all; then, for the first time since Laura could remember, that stern father took her in his arms, kissed her fondly, and said, —

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"My brave little Laura, father would rather lose all that he has in the world than not to have his children honest and truthful. A fault confessed is half redeemed; and father is sure his little daughter will never tell a falsehood again."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIAL BEGINS.

NETTIE seemed to be getting well as rapidly as could be expected. Her mother often carried baby up to Nettie's room, and there, to her great delight, the little thing would stare around, with her great blue eyes, and smile, and coo, and express her satisfaction generally in an entirely original expression — "Go-goo-ga-ga-goo!"

They had moved Nettie up from the library as soon as she was able to bear the change, and Eric and uncle Charlie had beautified her room with pictures, books, and curious little knickknacks they had brought home from the foreign lands they had visited.

The little monkey, Froll, had arrived safely, too, and was considered very amusing by all Nettie's companions who came to see her. •

Eric was, of course, devoted, and Allan Ramsdell came to see her every day. Lillie Hall and Laura were never tired of reading aloud, or inventing some new and interesting way of passing the time agreeably to poor, helpless Nettie; Laura, especially, bright, witty, and energetic, always had some highly original game to propose, a thrilling story to tell, or plans to form of what they would do when Nettie should be well.

Laura was a great favorite with Nettie; and she seemed now so penitent for the past, so careful, and anxious to improve, that Mr. and Mrs. Hyde encouraged her being with them as much as possible.

A good deal of this was owing to Thomas Carmichael, who had seen Nettie's father, and talked with him about Laura, explaining how little care had ever been taken of the

child, and what he intended to do for the future. Mr. Hyde was so pleased with the young man and his high resolves, that a friendship sprang up between them at once, and he promised to throw no obstacles in the way of Nettie's affection for his sister.

Mrs. Hyde had sent for Marion Grey to come to New York, and make their house her home while preparing for her marriage with Mr. Johnstone, which was to take place in a few months, and every day they were expecting her to arrive.

One afternoon Allan brought over his photographic views of foreign lands, to show Mrs. Hyde. They had been sent by his uncle, at Hamburg, and had just arrived.

Eric was seated at Nettie's feet, unpacking a box of carved ivory chessmen he had bought in Munich, and which they all agreed would be a very pretty wedding gift for Mr. Johnstone, who was fond of chess. Nettie was sitting near the window, with a thoughtful, half-frightened expression upon her face.

Mrs. Hyde held baby in her lap, by the open grate, and baby was stretching out her pretty pink toes to the blazing fire, luxuriating in its warmth as only babies can, and emitting her soft "coos" of satisfaction.

Allan was handing the photographs to Mrs. Hyde, and explaining each.

"Here," he said, — handing one over baby's wondering eyes, — "is the professor who cured me."

Mrs. Hyde started, exclaiming, "It is an exact likeness of the young doctor who brought Nettie in his arms from the school-house on the day of her accident."

She had seen him but once, and that only a week since. He was going to leave the country, he said, and called to see how Nettie was progressing. Nettie was asleep at the time, and she thought it a pity to awaken her, but assured him that she was doing nicely. He had left his card, with a written direction upon it, had refused any compensation for the "slight service," as

he called it, he had rendered the child, and left the house, but not without what had seemed to Mrs. Hyde like a look of pitying sympathy for herself, which she did not at all understand.

Nettie had called her then, and, laying away the card without looking at it at the time, she had not thought of it since. All this she remembered painfully now. Still she might be mistaken, she thought, and, in hopes that she was, asked, —

"What is the name, Allan?"

"Francis. Dr. John Francis."

"That is the one," Nettie said, quickly.

"Please bring the picture here, Allan. I would like to see it."

"Certainly," answered Allan, rising and handing it to her.

"Well," said Nettie, "where is it?"

Allan placed it in her hand.

Nettie looked down, then suddenly she cried out, in a trembling, tearful, pathetic voice, —

"I cannot see it, mamma; it is in my hand, and I cannot see it! I cannot even see the card. Mamma, mamma, am I growing blind?"

Ah! now Mrs. Hyde understood that young doctor's pitying look. This was what he had feared. She laid baby softly down, — pretty baby, cooing, and laughing, and innocent of sorrow, — and knelt beside her other daughter, putting her arms around Nettie, and drawing the child's head upon her bosom, saying, soothingly, —

"My darling, papa and I will pray you may be spared this heavy trial if possible; but if not, remember, darling, the words we read this morning, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,' and 'All things work together for good in them that love the Lord.'"

Eric, too overcome to speak, pressed one of Nettie's hands in silent sympathy, and Allan, with eyes full of tears and heart full of grief, exclaimed, —

"It is a heavy trial, but not incurable: remember that, Nettie."

"How foolish we are, all of us!" said Eric, suddenly; "her eyes are only weak. I can scarcely see, myself, when I look out into the sunlight."

But though all wished to believe him, the words only seemed like false hope.

Nettie's face remained buried in her mother's bosom for some minutes; then, raising her head and looking up sorrowfully, she said, —

"No, Eric, we had better face it. I have been afraid of it for some time, but did not tell any one, for I thought it might not be. And you must not lay it to my fall, for I felt it coming on long before that. And, mamma," she continued, sweetly, "I have asked the Lord to give me grace to bear the trial, and I will not complain nor fret about it. Perhaps in time I may be cured, as Allan was."

"We will hope for the best, my darling," was all the mother could say.

That same evening Mrs. Hyde looked for the doctor's card, and found it. There was simply written *Dr. John Francis, Oculist*, and the name and number of his hotel. A messenger was quickly despatched to beg him to come to Nettie, but returned to give the unwelcome tidings that he had sailed for Hamburg. Then, upon making inquiries, the wise men from the hospital learned that they had slighted the opinion and advice of the greatest oculist in the world. By following his directions this dreadful calamity might have been spared Nettie; but now, unless he should return, the case seemed hopeless.

CHAPTER IX.

NETTIE'S COURAGE.

"NETTIE, Nettie," cried Eric, one morning, bursting into her room with a joyous laugh, "guess who's come."

"Not Miss Marion!" exclaimed Nettie.

"And why not, Nettie?" Marion Grey asked, entering the room with Mrs. Hyde.

With a glad little cry of welcome, Nettie sprang forward to greet her, but, coming in contact with a chair, stumbled and fell.

"My dear," cried Mrs. Hyde, as Eric sprang forward and caught her, "are you hurt?"

"No, mamma, not at all. I didn't see the chair."

Eric led her to Miss Grey, who kissed her heartily, exclaiming, —

• “You have grown like a lily, and look like one, too, so pale and slender.”

“We'll have to take her out west to our farm, Marion,” said Mr. Johnstone. He had followed the others, and stood in the doorway with such a beaming, happy smile on his handsome face as Miss Grey must have liked to see.

If Nettie looked like a lily, Miss Grey instantly resembled a rose, for her face flushed a bright red; but she could not prevent a soft, glad light shining from her eyes at the mention of the home that would soon be hers.

“Perhaps western air would do her good; but could you spare her, Alice?”

“We will see,” said Mrs. Hyde, with an anxious look at Nettie's pale face.

Miss Grey, in answer to a motion from Nettie, drew her face down to the child's lips, and heard the whisper, —

“Lead me to the light, dear Marion. I am so glad you came before I am quite blind! I want to see your dear face.”

Miss Grey led her to the window, where a bright light shone through, and Nettie peered wistfully from her poor darkened eyes upon the sympathetic face before her.

And after this it was a touching sight to see the child lingering over whatever she wished to remember well when her sight would be wholly gone — her father, mother, Eric, Miss Grey, Johnstone, but most of all, baby.

She would hang over the little creature with yearning looks, until baby, frightened by the sad eyes above her, would pout and cry. Then Nettie would force back her tears, and sing to or play with her till baby laughed again, making her pretty face look like the tiny lily bells, when the sun breaks through upon them after a shower.

And all the while her father and mother were very sad.

Bright, merry, saucy little Nettie was gone. The gladsome elf that went dancing over the house from morning till night,

always in mischief, but still making sunshine in the shady places, and loving and gaining their love by her charming ways, had forsaken them.

In her place was a quiet little pale-faced girl, groping painfully about, peering sadly into all their faces, and hiding herself away to weep in secret over her terrible misfortune, and touching their hearts most pathetically by the way in which she tried to be reconciled to her unhappy lot.

"Papa," said she one day to her father, "it seems ages ago since I was hurt; how long ago was it?"

"About twelve weeks, dear."

"Twelve weeks! only twelve weeks! Are you sure, papa?"

"Quite sure, my dear."

"Well, it seems like six years. Miss Abbott and the school seem as far away, almost, as when I was a baby. How that fall has changed my life! Do you remember, papa, how we went to the office?"

"Yes, Nettie."

"And how you prayed that the Lord would lead me to love Him, and follow the Saviour, in his own good way?"

"Yes, darling, I remember it all."

"Perhaps *this* is His way, papa — my being blind. I get worse every day. I cannot see your face now, papa; and I think *this* is His way, because, you know, I used to rush into everything so, without stopping to consider if it was right or wrong; and though I meant to be good and thoughtful, I might have been just as bad again, and I might have made baby bad, too. That would have been dreadful. And so, papa, when I think so, I try not to murmur at my blindness; and I love God more, because I think He *is* taking care of me. I cannot help being sorry, and crying sometimes; I cannot help that —"

"No, of course not, my darling."

"But when I get sad enough to cry," continued Nettie, earnestly, "I think how much

I have left to make me happy, and how very much more the dear Saviour had to bear; and after that I always believe, papa, that it is all for the best."

"My own little darling!" cried Mr. Hyde, clasping her in his arms, and kissing her fondly.

"Papa, dear papa, you are crying; I feel your tears on my cheek," said Nettie, clinging to him. "I did not mean to make you cry. I am a thoughtless child, I know; but, papa, I will be better."

"You have made me very happy, my sweet child," was all the poor father said; but pressing her close to his heart, and realizing how much she had changed, he almost feared lest he should lose her from the earth, and was glad that a little worldly excitement, like Marion Grey's wedding, would soon happen to interest her.

Mr. Johnstone had an endless store of stories about western life, and Nettie and the boys were anxious to go out to the farm. I

say "the boys," meaning Eric and Allan, who spent more time in Mr. Hyde's house than in that of his aunt, the next door on the street. He had been blind, and was cured of it, as I said, by Dr. Francis. Having been sent to Hamburg to be placed under the doctor's care, he returned with Mrs. Hyde and Nettie, and had since been with them continually. Having once been blind, of course he understood better than any one how to sympathize with Nettie. And no one knew how to describe the things she could not see as Allan did. The three equally admired Mr. Johnstone, and were always at his side, for his bright pictures of the "land o' the setting sun" were very fascinating to them all. Nettie had gained a half-reluctant promise to spend part of Eric's next vacation with him there, and Allan declared that it would be too cruel to leave him alone, and he must go too. So they laid their plans.

One morning, while the boys were at

school, Mr. Johnstone had been telling Miss Grey and Nettie about his little sister, who had died in her childhood.

"Mabel," said Nettie, softly; "what a sweet, pretty name!"

"She was a dear, sweet child," said he.

Presently Nettie found her way up stairs.

"Mamma," she said, entering the nursery, "may I name baby?"

"That depends," said Mrs. Hyde, "on what name you select, for it might be one papa, and Eric, and I would not like."

"I think it is a sweet, pretty name; it's Mabel."

"Mabel, Mabel!" said Mrs. Hyde, addressing baby.

"Goo-goo-goo!" answered the small young lady.

"There, mamma, she likes it; she says 'good, good, good!'" cried Nettie, clapping her hands.

"Don't you like it, baby?" she continued;

"don't you want it for your name? wouldn't you like to be called little May?"

"Yah-yah-yah!" cried baby, with a laugh, as plainly as a baby could possibly speak; and Nettie, her own old merry laugh ringing out for the first time, clapped her hands again, crying, —

"O, what a funny baby! Mamma, dear, you know yourself that 'yah, yah, yah' is the Dutch for 'yes, yes, yes.'"

Mrs. Hyde laughed too, and baby, perceiving that she had said or done something very 'smart,' immediately followed suit with a series of "coos," "goos," and "yahs," and flourished her hands and feet, and puckered her little rosy mouth for the kisses always bestowed on such occasions. And then Nettie had a regular frolic with her, and the mother looked on with a bright smile, for Nettie seemed to be regaining her merry-heartedness.

When Eric and his father came home to dinner, their first visit was always paid to the

nursery, and there, on this day, they, attracted by the merriment within, found three laughing, beaming, happy faces, and Nettie's was one of them. The subject of naming baby was at once discussed. All liked the name of Mabel.

"It was my grandmother's name," said baby's father, "but all the better on that account. I like the old names, with their pleasant associations."

"Little great-grandmother!" said Eric, chucking the baby under her chin. "Now, mamma and papa, as Nettie has selected the first name, I ought to select the second. What was it the King of Holland called his queen, Nettie?"

"Alicia," answered Nettie.

"That's it," resumed Eric. "I want her called 'Mabel Alicia.'"

"Alicia is Alice," said Nettie.

"Yes," answered Eric, smiling to his mother, "I know it."

Mrs. Hyde understood that her son wished

to call baby for her, and suggested it in this delicate way, on account of the little sister gone to the heavenly fold, whose marble head-stone, in the cemetery, bore the one word "Alice."

And so baby's name was established — Mabel Alicia Hyde ; and a few days afterwards she was christened, in a wonderful white embroidered robe, which Miss Grey's deft fingers had made for her. Mr. Johnstone was delighted with the name, and with Nettie's kind desire to please him ; and baby May herself seemed to enjoy her new dignity hugely.

All were pleased to see Nettie's own lively, happy expression return, and to hear her merry laugh ringing over the house as it used to before the darkness shut her in. Gentle, and kind, and tender-hearted she still continued, and made less of her misfortune than any of the others, because she felt that however shrouded in darkness she became, the Lord's hand was leading her.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT A GOOD MANY THINGS.

"**A**LLAN," said Nettie, one day, "I've made up some verses for baby, and I want you to write them off for me: will you?"

"Why, certainly," answered Allan: "come to the library and I'll write them now."

He led her to a low chair by the fireplace, her favorite corner, and then, seating himself near her, said, "I'll write it with a pencil first, and then copy it nicely for you. There, now I am ready; you may begin."

So Nettie repeated, and Allan wrote, the following verses: —

TO BABY MAY.

"Baby, thou art sweetly sleeping;
Not a thought of care hast thou;
Angels bright their watch are keeping,
Kindly, gently, o'er thee now.

"Just to catch thy smile while dreaming,
Footsteps soft creep up the stair;
Hushed the room; thy sweet face seeming
Meet for angels' presence there.

"May they, all our prayers heeding,
Never from beside thee stray;
But, with watchful, tender leading,
Keep thee in their perfect way."

"Why, it's lovely!" was Allan's criticism. "Did you really write it yourself, Nettie?"

"No," said Nettie, laughing, "you wrote it, but I made it all up. I don't think it is very good. May is such a dear, sweet, pure little thing, it seems as if I ought to have done better. But then it's the very first thing that I ever made up."

"You should say composed," remarked Eric, patronizingly, who had entered the room while Allan was writing. "Let's see it."

Allan handed him the paper, and he read the little poem through.

"Why, Nettie, you're awfully clever!" he exclaimed, proud enough of this new characteristic in his bright little sister. "I wouldn't wonder if you wrote books some day. And I don't believe," he continued, "there's another little girl in the world, only ten years old, who could write such nice verses as those. Do you, Allan?"

"No, indeed," said Allan, positively.

"And the feet are all right, too," continued Eric, who was a Latin scholar.

"Feet?" said Nettie, completely puzzled, "It hasn't any feet."

"Well, if you are a poetess, you're a goose, too!" exclaimed Eric, laughing: "foot, in poetry, means measure, and the measure of yours is all right."

Nettie thought he meant the poem was just long enough ; but she didn't say so then, and a few years after, she laughed heartily at her juvenile idea of poetical measure.

Allan wrote the verses out handsomely, and as Nettie was seized with a sudden fit of bashfulness, carried them to Mrs. Hyde for her.

And then it was quite a wonder that Nettie's wise little head was not completely turned with the praises she gained ; but, poor child, her blindness made her so dependent, that she had no such ideas. But she took great comfort in writing little stories in prose and verse, and would sit for hours by herself thinking them up. Allan would write them over for her ; and her father sent one or two of them to a children's magazine, whose editor published them, telling the children who were to read them to see what a little girl, only ten years old, and blind at that, could do. And most of Nettie's pieces were really very pretty, and remarkably well

expressed for so young a child. She was more alone now, for Lillie Hall had gone to Washington, and Laura was not very well.

One evening, lying upon her mother's bed, she heard her father say, —

"Carmichael is in great trouble; he came to me to-day for help."

"Indeed!" her mother answered; "what is it?"

"You know he had a brother Robert, and the property was equally divided between them when the father died."

"Yes," said Mrs. Hyde. "I remember there was no will."

"Well, now, the brother, after letting the thing rest twelve years, brings forward a will, signed three years before old Mr. Carmichael's death, leaving Tom only a thousand dollars, and all the rest to Robert."

"Why did he not present the will when the settlement was made?"

"He claims to have found it recently."

"And do you think it is a true will?"

"No; my opinion is, that it is forged."

"Then, papa," cried Nettie, eagerly, having listened with breathless interest, "then you will prove it, and Laura's father need not give up his money."

Mr. Hyde looked annoyed that he should have been overheard, but remembering that was not Nettie's fault, replied, —

"I hope to, my dear; but you must be very careful not to speak of this to any one; a little accidental word might upset all our plans."

"I won't speak of it, papa," promised Nettie; "but I want to tell you, the last time that I was at Laura's, a man came into the library, and went up, poking all about that old secretary in the corner. I thought it was Mr. Carmichael, at first; but he happened to catch sight of me, and hurried out. I told Laura, when she come back to the room, and she ran to the window, and looked out, and said, —

"There goes my uncle Robert down the steps. I don't see any one else."

"And when was this?" asked her father.

"Before I grew quite blind," answered Nettie, sadly.

"You could not identify him, of course."

"Yes, I could, if I should hear him speak."

"Then he spoke to you?"

"Yes, sir, he spoke twice. The first time he said, 'I-I'll s-soon fi-ind if it's h-ear.' He was talking to himself then, and fumbling around the secretary. When he saw me, he started, and said, 'The dick-kickings!' and that made me laugh."

Mr. Hyde and his wife looked significantly at each other.

"Do you think he took anything from the secretary, Nettie?" asked her father.

"I heard a paper rustling after he opened the doors, and again after he saw me."

"How did you know when he opened the doors, dear?"

"One of them swings out in front of the

window ; when he opened that, I could see it very well, because it blocked the light so."

"Do you think he put the paper back again?"

"No, papa; it *sounded* as if he put it into his pocket."

"Now, my darling," said her father, kindly, "I am very much obliged for what you have said, and I want you to remember just what that man said, and how he said it, and all that you have told me. And this is the hardest of all, — don't tell any one, not even Eric or Allan. Can you keep the secret, think?"

"Yes, indeed, papa."

"I hope so, for it may help me a great deal."

"I'm so glad," said Nettie, flushing, "to be of some use, and to have a secret to keep, too."

"Some use?" echoed her mother; "my darling, what would papa, or Eric, or baby, or I do, without you? You little goosie,

don't you know one of the best 'uses' in the world is to be sweet-tempered and lovable?"

"But, remember, my pet," said her father, "that, in keeping a secret, you must let no one know you have a secret to keep."

"And that's the secret of keeping it?" retorted Nettie.

"Just so," answered her father, laughing. "Miss Abbott used to say that your memory was wonderful; perhaps I shall test it by and by. But just now, there's that little witch of a May crowing over you, and begging and coaxing for a frolic. Here comes a great gray grizzly," he added, dropping upon his knees, advancing with a low, prolonged growl, and fingers frantically clutching at the air.

Baby May screamed with delight, and stretched out to him her dimpled white arms, crowing and dancing so her mother could scarcely hold her, while her papa, dignified lawyer though he was, seemed to enjoy the frolic as much as baby did.

A hearty frolic it was too, and such a noisy one that I am very sure, if Johnstone and Miss Grey had not been intensely interested in and wholly occupied with each other, they would have rushed up from the parlor to inquire what was the matter.

The time for the wedding was fast drawing near, and Nettie's mind was agitated by the serious question of what her wedding presents to the happy couple should be. After consulting everybody, she decided on a pretty bronze clock for Johnstone, and a set of spoons for Miss Grey. Allan helped her in her choice, her mother approved, and then her father paid the bill, as fathers generally do, and paid it gladly and willingly, for he considered that while Johnstone had saved Nettie's life, Marion Grey had done very much by her little wise, kind sayings, and pleasant ways of giving advice, to make that life a well-spring of happiness.

How busy everybody was over the wedding arrangements! And what a shout of joy

arose, when a huge package arrived from London for the happy pair! and what another cry of admiration they uttered when there appeared a beautiful life-size portrait of Adele! — her sweet face, her beautiful, clear blue eyes and golden hair, so life-like that it seemed as though she might step from the canvas and speak to them.

Mr. Nichols and his wife knew that nothing would please so well as this picture, and had been to much trouble and expense to have it taken. If they could have seen the delight it occasioned, they would have felt amply rewarded. Adele had begged that she might send something of her own, and had made a lovely box with the sea shells that were thrown upon the beach at Ennisfellen, and filled it with pretty laces, so that, when opened, it looked like white foam spread over the tiny pink shells. Herbert had put in a handsome Meerschaum pipe, knowing Johnstone's weakness for tobacco.

While these unexpected gifts were calling

forth warm encomiums from all, no one knew that Nettie had stolen away, and was crying softly by herself. Poor child! she loved Adele dearly, and had not seen her for so long! and now, not to be able to see this splendid picture of her, it was too bad!

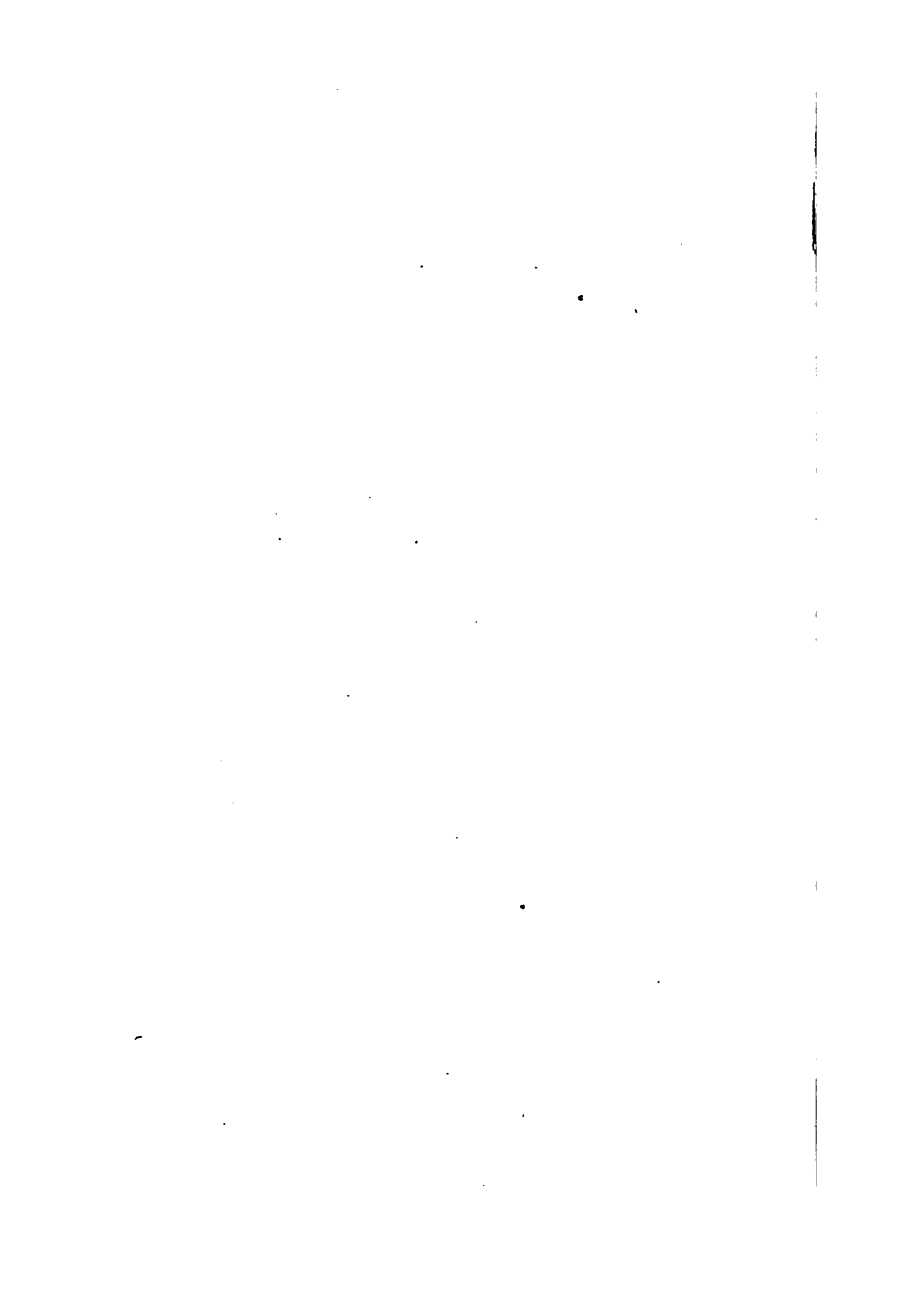
Allan found her, after a while, curled up in her chair by the library fire, and made her laugh again, by telling how Froll had acted.

Eric took her into the room where the picture of Adele had been unpacked, and the minute the little monkey had caught sight of it, with a little scream of delight, she sprang from his arms and skipped up to the picture. Then she stretched forth an inquiring paw, and touched the heavy gilt frame, drew it back, and extending it again, tried to clutch at Adele's dress, and was evidently completely puzzled when her paw glided over the flat surface of the canvas.

Scratching her side and chattering very fast, she sat still a minute, wondering what it



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all meant, and then jumped round behind the picture, and seeing there only the back board, whisked round to the front again. Then, completely puzzled, she flew into a passion, and Eric had to take her off for fear she might injure the picture. Nettie laughed when Allan told the story, and presently Johnstone, coming in, told a funnier one.

"Froll's bewilderment," said he, "puts me in mind of an old Camanche Indian, who took his young wife to Denver to have her daguerreotype taken. The artist stood the squaw before the camera, and went into his dark closet for the plate. The old Camanche thought he'd take a look into that funny box the artist had his head in, and see how 'twas done. So he put his head under the cloth and looked, and there, O, horror! there was his squaw standing on her head. He jerked his own head out, and with a savage look at her, asked what she meant 'by cutting such a caper.' Of course she denied doing anything at all; so he put his

head under the cloth again, and there she was upside down. He rushed at her, and boxed her ears, and told her 'not to do that again.' And, with tears in her eyes, the bewildered squaw stoutly declared she had done nothing.

"Now he was determined to catch her, and tried to look at her with one eye and through the camera with the other; but this he couldn't do. So, drawing his head down slowly, he kept one eye on her, and as she disappeared from sight there was the wretched thing on her head again. He jerked his head up quickly, and she was on her feet; he jerked it down, and looked through the camera, and she was on her head again: then evidently thinking the machine had bewitched her, he wrapped his blanket about him, and took her off to the medicine-man, who, although he tried hard, could never convince him that the unlucky squaw stood properly on her feet, and that it was only her

image, in the glass lenses, that was upside down."

The laugh lasted for a while; but when Nettie went up stairs with her mamma at night, she burst into tears, exclaiming, —

"O, mamma, mamma! it is so hard to bear this horrible, black darkness! I wish I could see."

And the mother answered with loving kisses, —

"Darling, if we could all see into the Lord's wisdom, we should know that every trial we endure is for our good."

And then with loving, comforting words she soothed poor Nettie's grief, and left her sleeping happily.

Her parents had written to Dr. Francis, and daily expected to hear from him. But they said nothing to Nettie as yet, for all the physicians whom they had consulted in New York gave no hope that her sight might be restored.

CHAPTER XI.

HIDE AND SEEK.

"**L**AURA, Laura," called Robbie, "where in the world are you?"

"Robin, Robin, Robin, O, Robin dear!
And what will this poor Robin do,
Who cannot find me here?" —.

Laura answered, singing.

Robbie was in the hall, and Laura's voice seemed to come from the library; so he ran in there, and looked eagerly around, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Thomas was at the window, reading.

"Where is Laura?" asked Robbie.

His brother looked up with a smile. "Look for her, Rob," said he; "she was singing just now."

"Robin, Robin, Robin,"

sang Laura again ; and now the voice seemed to come from the ceiling.

Robbie threw his head back, and stared around.

"Where *are* you?" said he ; "call again."

"Here," answered Laura.

There was an old-fashioned mahogany secretary, the one Nettie had mentioned, in the corner by the window. Mrs. Carmichael had requested, time and again, that it might be removed from the room ; but her husband would not consent, because it had been his father's, he said, and he liked to have something in the house to remind him of the good old times.

It was very tall, evidently intended, originally, to reach quite to the ceiling : in Mr. Carmichael's high-studded library, however, there was a wide space between it and the top of the room.

Tom's favorite seat, the high-backed arm-

chair by the window, stood close beside this old secretary ; and Laura, climbing upon the chair one morning, discovered that the top was formed like a deep box, and the idea instantly suggested itself to her ready imagination that this would make a capital hiding-place.

"Tom, please help me up here," she said. "There's Robbie calling, and I want to hide from him."

"But it's dreadfully dusty ; you'll soil your clothes," remonstrated Tom, who firmly believed that "cleanliness was next to godliness."

"No ; I'll be careful. Put me up, Tom, there's a good boy !"

And Tom, assured he would have no peace until he complied with her request, did as she desired. Then she lay down, — for it was quite a roomy space, — and was completely hidden from sight when Robbie came into the room.

Up, down, and around he went, looking.

"Don't speak again, Laura," said Tom.

"No," answered Laura, incautiously.

"I declare!" cried Robbie, "I do believe you're on the top of that old secretary. If you are, it's a mighty good place, for I can't see an inch of you. Now, Tom, I've got to climb on your chair. Boost me up! That's it! O, Laura Carmichael, what a looking thing! Wouldn't I give a quarter to have mother catch you so! You look like Sootie, that sweeps out the chimneys. You look like a miller crawling out of a coal-hole. Get out of the way, and let me in!"

Then, grasping at the high top-bordering of the old secretary, Robbie struck out like a frog, and practised gymnastics furiously and frantically, endeavoring to drag himself into the cuddy-house, as Laura called it.

Now, Robbie Carmichael was a fat, heavy boy, and the old desk had not experienced such rough treatment for many a long day; and so, just as Robbie was swinging himself over the side, it groaned and cracked,

and something burst open, and down upon Tom's head there came a shower of papers.

"Good for gracious!" screamed Laura;
"I'm going right through!"

"Children," cried Tom, aghast, "what have you done?"

"Jimminy!" exclaimed Robbie; "here comes father. We're in for it now. But I do believe my leg is broken, or something."

Mr. Carmichael entered, looking worn and harassed, and seemed annoyed to find the children in the room. Just as he opened his lips to reprimand, one of the papers on the floor caught his eye.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed; and his face grew very white as he stooped to pick it up.

"Last Will and Test—" began Robbie, reading from the side.

"Leave the room!" thundered his father.
"Thomas, call a hack directly, and go for Mr. Hyde. Tell him it is very important that he should come."

Robbie had gone, and Tom hurried off to obey his father's command.

"O, dear!" thought Laura, "father is so angry! I shall never dare to get down while he is here. I'll lie down, and wait till he goes out. What did Robbie mean, I wonder? 'Last will and test.' Test what? test means to try. Hullo! there's uncle Robert."

Mr. Carmichael's brother had entered the room without knocking at the door, or going through the ceremony of having his name called by the butler.

"Tom," said he, offhandedly, "you are foolish to contest our father's will. You had better agree to my proposition, and withdraw your claims at once."

"I fully intend to abide by the legal decision regarding the will," returned Laura's father, coolly—"the *true* will," he added, "which has been found."

"*What!*" thundered uncle Robert, in a

tone that made Laura start violently in her concealed hiding-place.

"The true will has been found," said Mr. Carmichael, calmly.

"When?"

"This morning."

"Where?"

"In the secretary."

"Goodness!" thought Laura, "if he looks up here he'll certainly see me."

"By whom?" asked uncle Robert.

"The children, I believe; but I did not ask. I came in, and found it by those other papers on the floor."

"And what are the contents of the will?" asked uncle Robert, biting his lips hard, and turning pale and red, by turns, with passion.

"I do not know. I have sent for Mr. Hyde, and you can stay to hear it read."

"Then you have it?" cried uncle Robert, quickly and passionately.

In another instant, with a heavy blow he stretched Mr. Carmichael senseless upon the

floor, and seizing the will, which he drew from the pocket of the prostrate man, he fled from the house.

Laura, from her secure retreat saw it all, and with a low moan for her father's fate climbed down and knelt over him. Mr. Hyde and Tom, coming in soon after, found her there, chafing the cold hands, and weeping bitter tears over the white, still face, and calling tenderly upon him to speak to her.

"Uncle Robert struck him with his walking-stick. I saw him," she cried to Tom, and stood by, wringing her hands and crying, while they applied the vigorous measures necessary to restore him. It did not take long, for he was only stunned. Opening his eyes and murmuring, "O, Robert, brother Robert!" he saw the anxious faces about him.

"I am not hurt," he said. "I think Robert wanted the will. I'm glad you've come, Mr. Hyde. I want you to take it. It's in my breast pocket."

"No, it isn't," sobbed Laura; "uncle Robert took it out; I saw him."

Mr. Carmichael was still sitting upon the floor, and Thomas was supporting him. He thrust a hand into the breast pocket, and the will was gone. .

"It is true. He has taken it," was all he said; but the pale face grew dark with anger, and the purple bruise, made by his brother's cane, worked upon his temple.

"Shall you have him arrested?" asked Tom.

"Certainly."

"Then it should be done at once," suggested Mr. Hyde. "He may leave the country."

"Will you have the goodness to see to it, sir?" said Mr. Carmichael. "My head is still suffering from the effects of the blow I received."

Mr. Hyde said, "Certainly!" and hurried off to obtain a warrant; but passing Laura, he could not repress a smile at her appear-

ance. The accumulated dust of years had been disturbed by her upon the top of the secretary. It clung to her frock, it powdered her hair gray, and smutched her face all over, until she looked, as Robbie had said, like the little Sootie who cleaned the chimneys.

Mr. Carmichael was leaning heavily against his son, still feeling the effects of the violent blow. Mr. Hyde paused a minute, and asked, "Miss Laura, how came you to be a witness? Where were you?"

Laura, crimson with shame, pointed to the top of the secretary, and was about to rush away, when Mr. Hyde asked her to be careful not to mention the affair to any one, and then went off in a great hurry, as if to make up for lost time.

Even Mr. Carmichael could not restrain a smile at Laura's figure; and as for Tom, he laughed heartily.

"Have you been up there all this time,

poor child?" said he. "I should think you might be rather disgusted with your cubby-house by this time."

"Disgusted? *dusted* you mean," sang out Robbie's voice from the hall. "What a guy!"

"Laura, go and be made to look like a respectable child, and then come back here and explain how all this happened," said Tom, pitying her confusion.

Laura ran off.

"I broke the machine, if that's what you mean," said Robbie, eager to relate his share of what had caused so much excitement.

But Tom would not listen to him till his father had been attended to; and so Robbie went off to the nursery, where, to the great diversion of Billy and the twins, nurse was divesting Laura of her coat of dust.

"It's a coat of *one*, and not *many* colors; isn't it, Laura?" said Robbie, crazy to hear what had happened in the library; but Laura

could not be beguiled into telling him anything.

"You'll be sorry if you don't," said Robbie, beginning to tease. "I wonder how thick the dirt is on you!" and he gave her a dreadful pinch.

Laura could not help a little scream of pain.

"Lobbie, 'top!" cried Joe, meaning "Robbie, stop!" "'ou sant pague Lollie; mamma said so."

Robbie pinched Laura again, and then turned quickly upon Joe.

"What do you mean by calling me "Lobbie top?" said he.

"I did-na," replied little Joe; "said Lobbie, 'top!"

"Well, that's just what I said you said; and now you say you didn't say what I say you did say."

Little Joe was silenced; he stared hard, and began sucking his thumb. Robbie's "says" were too much for him. But Rob-

bie's triumph was short-lived, for the nurse asked him if he wasn't "too big a boy to be round when young ladies were dressing;" and Billy and the twins set up a shout of triumph as she hustled him out.

By and by Laura and Robbie were recalled, by their father, to the library, where they narrated all that had happened; and Robbie became possessed of facts which, he afterwards declared, "just made his eyes stick out."

"I don't want to be called for uncle Robert now. Can't I change my name, papa?" said he, on that eventful day, in the library.

"No, my boy," answered Mr. Carmichael; "it was your grandfather's name. His son has disgraced it; and *you* must make it honorable."

And this reply gave Robbie something to think of.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT CAME OF A WALK IN CENTRAL PARK.

THE next day came. The warrant for Robert Carmichael's arrest had been issued, but the wicked man had disappeared, and taken the will with him. He had always been wild and unruly, and had caused his father much unhappiness. Now, by his evident intention to make away with the newly-found will, Mr. Hyde was sure that the will was in favor of his brother.

On that account the anxiety to recover it was very great, but there seemed no chance of finding either the will or the man. They heard he had left the country.

All this did not prevent the busy preparations going on at home for the wedding.

The tucking, and basting, and flouncing, and ruffling, and hemming, and goring, and fitting nearly drove Nettie out of her wits.

If she spoke to mamma or Marion, they were deep in the mysteries of yokes or peplums; and if Johnstone wanted Marion to walk out with him, the dress-maker was sure to have set that particular time for trying something on.

So he, in a fit of despair, had gone to Boston on business, and while Allan and Eric were at school little May slept, and so poor Nettie was thrown quite on her own resources.

She was sitting all alone in the library this morning, looking very lonely and miserable, when her mother came in and found her.

"What can I do for my little girl?" asked Mrs. Hyde, kneeling beside her. "We shall soon be over this hurry, my darling, and then mamma will give herself up entirely to you for a while."

"I wish there was something I could do," said Nettie, dolefully.

"How would you like to go up to Central Park?" suggested her mother. "I can spare Ann to go with you."

"Well," said Nettie, doubtfully, "perhaps I would like it."

"You can't help enjoying yourself this beautiful day. The birds will be singing there, and the air full of the scents of violets and lilies. I am sure it will do you good."

"Well," said Nettie again, more cheerfully this time.

So Mrs. Hyde rang for Ann, and told her to dress Miss Nettie for a walk in the Park; and when they were ready she gave Ann the tickets for their fares in the horse-cars, and then from the window watched Nettie walking listlessly along, as if there was nothing in the world to care for, and looking so different from the little girl who used to go flying up and down the streets, that the tender mother's eyes filled with tears, and

she went back to Marion with a heavy heart.

Ann led Nettie to a horse-car, and when they reached the Park took her about it, among the fragrant flower-beds, and down to the pond where the beautiful white swans sailed about; then they strolled off to that part of the beautiful pleasure-ground which was left wild and in a state of nature.

Here were great rocks, mossy and brown, and covered with the fragrant spring flowers, sweet saxifrage, and saucy columbine in his scarlet coat and green cap nodding defiance to the drowsy bumble-bees. Thrushes, warblers, and sparrows made the place ring with sweet music, and bobolink was scolding away in his busybody fashion, and gay little butterflies went flaunting through the air.

All this Nettie could not see; but she could hear the birds, and smell the sweet flowers. And when the soft breezes and warm little sunbeams came up and kissed her cheeks, and whispered how sorry they

were for her, and told her of the beautiful, beautiful sky, and the white, fleecy clouds above, of the kingcups, and daisies, and violets beneath her feet, and the green, green grass, and leafy trees, and the bright, sparkling sunlight in the water, how *could* she be unhappy?

"O, I am so glad I came!" she exclaimed. "I want to stay here a while, Ann. Let us sit down."

Ann led her to a seat, and then said, —

"If you please, Miss Nettie, would you mind sitting here alone for a few minutes? I just saw my cousin Mary out yonder, and I'd like to speak to her."

"Very well, Ann; but don't be long," said Nettie, nervously, for she felt very helpless when quite alone.

Ann answered glibly that she would be "right back," and hurried after Mary, and Nettie was left there alone.

But she did not think of herself and her blindness now. She was busy trying to think

of something she could do for Allan, who was so kind to her ; kinder almost than Eric, for though Eric loved her dearly, as she well knew, he did tease her sometimes.

"It's getting too warm to think of making knit stockings, or mittens, or a muffler," she said to herself. "I must think of something else. I wonder how —"

"O-o-o-h !" sounded a strange noise, near by.

"Mercy ! what is that ?" cried she, starting up. "O, dear ! how it frightened me ! It sounded just like a groan."

"O-o-o-h !" was repeated.

"O, dear me ! somebody is hurt. What shall I do ?" cried the tender-hearted child, wringing her hands. "Ann ! Ann !" she shouted.

There was no answer from Ann, but again that low moan of anguish reached her, with the words, —

"Help, help ! for God's sake ! I am dying !"

Without waiting to hear more, the com-

passionate child started in the direction of the voice, and crawled on her hands and knees over the rocks.

"Where are you? Speak again. I cannot see," she cried.

"Here," groaned a man's voice, close to her.

As Nettie groped her way along to reach him, one hand came in contact with a folded paper, which, in the excitement of the moment, she slipped into her pocket, as she crawled along to where the man lay. Presently she touched him, and then asked tremulously, —

"Poor man, are you hurt? Can I help you?"

"I have f-fallen and broken m-my ribs," said the man, faintly. "Ca-call some one."

Nettie stood up quickly. She had a double motive for "calling some one" now. She recognized that voice. The helpless man was Robert Carmichael.

So, loud and quickly her fresh young

voice rang out, "Help! help!" and ere the echoes from the old rocks died away, there came an answering shout from the next path. Nettie shouted again — "Police!"

"Don't call the police!" murmured the wounded man. "Don't call the police."

Little Nettie could not help pitying him. "I won't tell them who you are, Mr. Carmichael," she said, fearlessly. "I'll have you taken to your brother's house. He will be kind to you."

"No, no!" he exclaimed, as the coming footsteps drew near. "Quick — promise!"

He was in such dreadful agony of pain, that Nettie knew it by his voice. She pitied him so! soft hearted little girl that she was. With something of her old impetuosity, she knelt down and whispered, "I will take you home to my own mamma, and uncle Charlie shall take care of you. He's a doctor."

"God bless you!" he exclaimed, fervently. And then the place grew so strangely silent, that Nettie was afraid he had died.

"Help, help, O, help!" she shrieked again. And two policemen rushed to the spot.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed one of them, rushing to Mr. Carmichael. "He is hurt; he has fainted. Call a carriage, little girl."

"I can't," replied Nettie, turning her large, mournful black eyes upon him. "I am blind."

The man stared in pitying wonder at the child, and his companion asked, —

"Do you know this man, and where he lives?"

"Yes, I know him," said Nettie. "He must be taken to my father's;" and she gave the number of their house on Fifth Avenue.

A number of people had reached the spot by this time, and one of them, a kind-hearted old gentleman, offered the use of his carriage, which was at hand.

The officers took up the injured man, and bore him to the carriage. The old gentle-

man led Nettie, and the crowd followed them.

One of the officers got inside with Robert Carmichael and heroic little Nettie, and the carriage door was shut; and its owner gave the direction, "23- Fifth Avenue." Then it rolled off.

"That's a brave little maiden," thought the benevolent old man; "blind, too; what a pity! Her people must see John Francis. I'll tell them. I'll remember the number '23-.'"

And where, all this while, was Ann? She had to follow her cousin Mary a good way before she overtook her, and then was beguiled into running round to the house where Mary lived out, in Fifty-ninth Street, to see a new gown, described as "the beautifullest thing" she ever saw.

The giddy girl had no idea of how the time flew by. The new gown and some cheap jewelry were examined and admired,

and all Miss Grey's wedding preparations were described and commented on.

After gossiping for about an hour, Ann started back to the Park for Nettie; but, of course, long before that Nettie was gone.

The frightened girl hunted up and down in real distress, and finally questioned an officer, who said the child had gone off in a gentleman's carriage with a man who was hurt. That was all he could tell her, and, frightened almost to death, the careless girl went back to the house.

Meanwhile the carriage containing Nettie and the injured man was drawing near to the house. Mr. Carmichael seemed to suffer greatly, and Nettie was anxious to have him relieved.

Mrs. Hyde and Marion Grey were busily at work in Miss Grey's pleasant room; its front windows overlooked the Avenue, and Marion, sitting at one of them, and looking out, exclaimed, —

"Here's a carriage stopping. I wonder if Murray — Why, it's Nettie!"

"Nettie!" exclaimed Mrs. Hyde, looking quickly down, and then hurrying off down stairs. When she reached the hall, Nettie was there, and two men were bringing another up the steps.

"My dear!" began Mrs. Hyde.

But Nettie stopped her with a whisper.

"It's Mr. Robert Carmichael, mamma," she said.

Mrs. Hyde was vastly astonished, and for an instant too bewildered to speak.

"He's dreadfully hurt," continued Nettie.
"You must send for uncle Charlie, mamma."

Mrs. Hyde herself led the way up stairs to an unoccupied room. The men laid their heavy burden upon the bed, and went out; then, giving them each a bank note, Mrs. Hyde requested them to bring her brother, Dr. Ward, from his office on Fifteenth Street.

On the stairway was Marion Grey, pale

and dreadfully distressed, with the insane idea that the man she had seen brought in from the carriage was Johnstone.

Mrs. Hyde assured her it was a stranger, and then her attention was drawn to Nettie; who was in a strangely excited state, crying and laughing, and almost in a fit of hysteria.

Her mother soothed and quieted her, but not until she had promised that Robert Carmichael should be kindly treated, and not given up to be imprisoned or hanged, which the child considered one and the same thing.

When uncle Charlie arrived, Mrs. Hyde sent Marion in to sing to her, and, under the influence of her sweet voice, Nettie dropped off to sleep.

The little heroine did not know what an excitement she had caused. Word reached Mr. Hyde that Robert Carmichael had been found by Nettie, and was at the house. Laura's father was in the office when the message came, and the two at once proceeded to Mr. Hyde's.

Dr. Ward had set the broken bones by the time they arrived. He ushered them into the room, and they hastened forward to look at the sufferer, scarcely daring to believe that it was he.

"You must not disturb him," said Dr. Ward, in a whisper. "He will be better by and by."

Of course nothing could be learned until Nettie awoke; and while she slept unconsciously, they all wondered how the child had managed to find him.

Ann had been questioned, but confessed, with a shower of tears, that she had left Miss Nettie alone for a few minutes, and while she was gone it had all happened.

By and by the child awoke, refreshed and strengthened by her nap; and taking her to the library, her father held her in his lap, while she related, in her own bright, animated way, the whole of her strange adventure, not omitting her promise that Mr. Carmichael should be well treated, and ex-

plaining why she had him brought to her father's, and why she did not give the policemen his name.

"Bless you for a brave, kind-hearted little girl!" exclaimed Mr. Carmichael. "He is my brother, and I love him still. If he will give up the will, I will not take any steps against him."

"And O, papa," cried Nettie, suddenly reminded, "I found a letter or something, and put it in my pocket, because I couldn't see what it was, and didn't know what to do with it. Here it is."

She drew out the folded paper she had found, and handed it to her father. He gave one glance at it, tossed it to Mr. Carmichael, and pressing Nettie to his heart, almost smothered her with kisses.

It was the missing will.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETRIBUTION.

ROBERT CARMICHAEL died. The injuries inflicted by his fall upon the rocks in Central Park proved fatal.

At his own request he was moved to his brother's home, and his nephew Tom lost no opportunity to plead for and pray with the repentant sufferer. Before he died he asked his brother's forgiveness for the great wrong he would have done him.

"I felt so badly about the blow I struck, Thomas!" said he, pleadingly; "every minute I seemed to see your dead face lying before me, till I was almost crazy. I had a dozen minds about the will: all night I lay awake trying to decide whether I would take it

back to you or keep it. In the morning I had arrived at no conclusion, and, afraid to be seen lurking round, I went to that wild, unfrequented nook in Central Park to settle my plans. There, in my fall, stern justice overtook me. O how I suffered! torments of pain and stings of conscience! I must have died there soon, if that brave, kind little blind girl had not heard me. I am glad you have the will, brother; all the property is yours now, and you will make better use of it than I should have done."

Another time he asked,—

"Tom, one of your boys is named for me?"

"Yes," said his brother, "Robbie."

"I want to see him," said the sick man; and Robbie was sent to him.

The lad came in shyly. His uncle had never noticed him before.

Now, as Robbie laid his hand in his uncle's, he asked the boy,—

"What is your name?"

"Robert Carmichael," replied Robbie, promptly.

The sick man sighed.

"You are named for me, you know."

"Yes, sir," answered Robbie, not feeling very proud of that honor.

"I want you to retrieve the name, Robbie. I have disgraced it. I was a bad boy, and after that a bad man. I never wanted to be controlled, and never would be; and now you see what it has brought me to. Robbie, let my fate be a warning to you. Mind your parents in everything. They know best what is good for you and what is not. Be honest. Never tell a lie. And ask the Lord to help you make your name an honorable one. - Will you do this, my boy?"

"Yes, sir," sobbed Robbie, deeply affected.

His uncle took his watch from the pillow, where it lay, and binding the guard about Robbie's neck, placed the watch in his hands. It was a handsome, heavy gold hunting watch, and Robbie's heart throbbed

with pride and pleasure, as his uncle said, —

"Keep that, my boy, to remind you of your promise to uncle Robert when he is gone."

"Thank you, sir," he replied; and then, with a sudden pang of grief in his generous little heart, he cried, "But O, I don't want you to die, uncle Robert!"

A shadow of pain crossed the sick man's face.

"It would be pleasant to live and undo some of the wrongs I have done in the world," said he; "but if God will forgive me, and take me to His heaven, how can I be thankful enough for his goodness and mercy?"

To Tom uncle Robert left a sum of money and his cameo ring. And he sent Nettie a large and valuable music-box, which had stood for years in his room at the Astor House, and which he thought the blind child

would enjoy more than anything that could be bought for her.

His own money, a fortune left him by his dead wife, he left, subject to Tom's control, to be used for the benefit of the poor. All his last moments were spent in doing good, and when he died they all mourned his loss, but knew he had gone to God. Poor uncle Robert! the sweetest flowers in his life grew from the rocks of retribution.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW FRIEND ; AND THE WEDDING AT LAST.

THE old gentleman who kindly lent his carriage on the day of Nettie's adventure in the Park, was a surgeon general, and the highest medical authority in the state. True to his promise, he called on her parents to inquire for the injured man, and to express his interest in the child. Nettie was in the parlor, listening with rapt attention to her beautiful music-box, which was playing a wild, sad, sweet little German air.

When Mrs. Hyde came down to him, he introduced himself, expressed his sorrow to hear of Mr. Carmichael's death, and then

apologizing for the liberty he was taking, asked about Nettie's blindness.

He was such a pleasant, kindly old gentleman, and seemed to feel so much sympathy for Nettie, that Mrs. Hyde told him all about it. When she came to the part of her story where Dr. Francis called, and did not see Nettie, her listener interrupted, —

"Dear, dear, that is too bad! Why, madam, he is the most successful oculist in the world, and, young as he is, is at the head of the Hamburg Blind Infirmary. His history is a singular one; he was blind himself, from his fifth to his sixteenth year, and he has devoted himself since then to removing the obstructions from darkened sight wherever he finds a case. Rich or poor, he helps alike. What a pity he has gone!"

He then examined Nettie's eyes, and declared the trouble to be a cataract, not caused by her fall, but doubtless hastened by it.

He explained to Nettie that a cataract in

the eye was a film, covering the pupil like a veil; that by skilful physicians they were often removed, and that he had no doubt Dr. Francis would cure her.

Nettie drew her breath in one long, quick gasp, and with a joyful sob exclaimed, —

"O, if he only could! No one but Allan knows what a terrible thing it is to be shut up in such horrible blackness all the time. And it is worse for those that have seen once than if they had been born blind. O, if I only, only could see!"

How they pitied the poor little girl!

Her mother told her they had written to Dr. Francis, and were awaiting his reply; and the kind old gentleman said he would write to him too.

So Nettie began hoping for her sight. She was a brave little girl, and did not fear the painful operation she must bear if Dr. Francis said she could be cured.

But O, the time she must wait! Would it ever go?

It did go very quickly, for Johnstone came back, Eric and Allan had vacation, and Nettie's new friend, the surgeon general, declared that as he had no grandchildren, and they had no grandfather, they would adopt each other. And while Mrs. Hyde helped Marion, and Johnstone would do nothing but admire her, the surgeon general took the three children on walks and drives, and to concerts and exhibitions, and fed them on candy, cakes, fruits, and ices, until bread and butter became a positive luxury.

Little May was quite slighted for the time being, and revenged herself by keeping nurse on the *qui vive* from her propensity to

"See a pin and pick it up,"

and then try to swallow it, as she crawled about the floor. Laura and Robbie came often to see them. Both children were greatly changed, and wore deep mourning for their uncle. Laura was as gentle now as she had been rude before, and as bright

and merry as ever. And Robbie never forgot the conversation with his dying uncle. The heritage left him, to make his name honorable, was worth more to the lad than silver and gold could be. It was making him an honest, truthful, upright, thoughtful boy.

And at home Tom's influence had made a pleasant, peaceful place of the nursery. Instead of the fighting, and kicking, and bitter quarrelling that used to prevail there, joyous laughter and happy voices rang out; and Billy and the twins were merry, free-hearted little fellows. Don't you think the nurse must have appreciated the change? Mrs. Carmichael took no notice of it, or if she did, never said so; but Tom's father understood it all, and his grateful thanks were warmly given to the young man. But Tom's best reward was the knowledge that the children were all trying to be "children of the light."

Most books for grown folks end in a wedding; and why should not this? especially with two such nice people to marry as Johnstone and Marion Grey.

Great excitement prevailed at the mansion on Fifth Avenue. Lillie Hall, having returned from Washington, flew in and out a dozen times a day; and to the intense disgust of the boys, there was a great deal of talk about "white muslin," "sashes," "shoulder knots," &c.; for you must know that Nettie and Lillie, and Eric and Allan, were to "stand up" with the bride and bridegroom.

The important day came at last. Baby May was dressed first, as being the least patient under the process, and then in nurse's arms went down to the drawing-room, and "cooed," and clapped her little white hands, and opened her pretty blue eyes at garlands and wreaths of flowers which decorated the room. And then she nestled down, and her eyes grew drowsy, and she went to sleep; as

much as to say "it wasn't her wedding, and she didn't care."

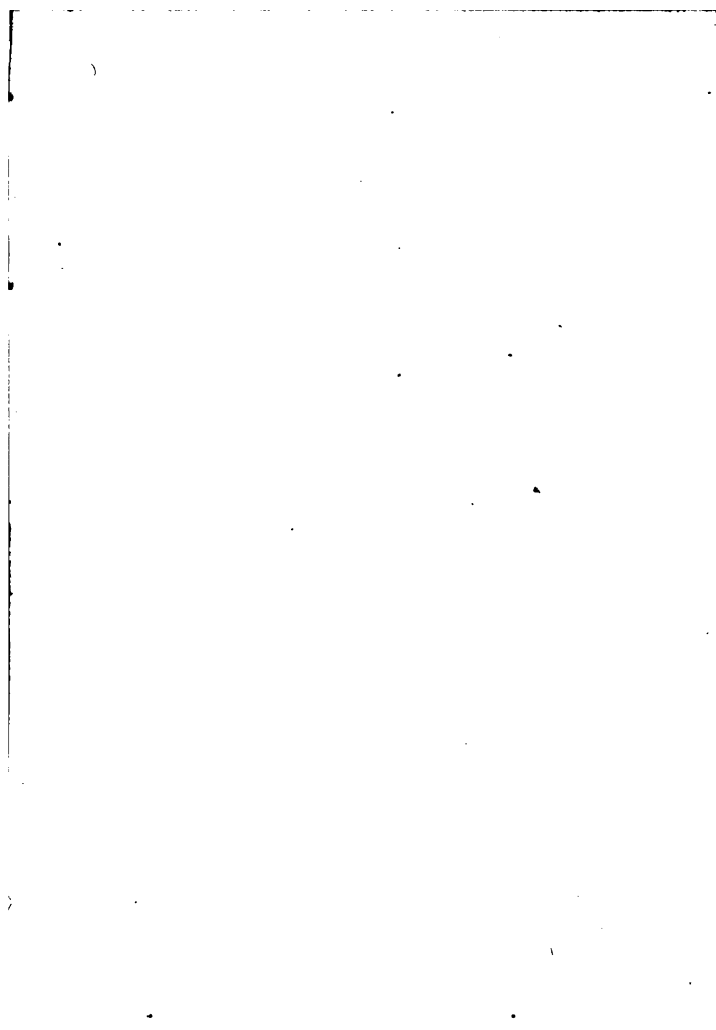
Nettie and Lillie were not so indifferent to the occasion, being the bridesmaids. Very pretty they looked, as all the people indiscreetly told them. Very lovely was the bride, with her long veil and wreath of orange flowers; and very happy was Johnstone, you may be sure.

Mr. Hyde found time, just before the ceremony, to show to his wife and the surgeon general a letter from Germany, setting forth Dr. Francis's opinion that Nettie's blindness was curable, and that he would be in America again in the course of a few months.

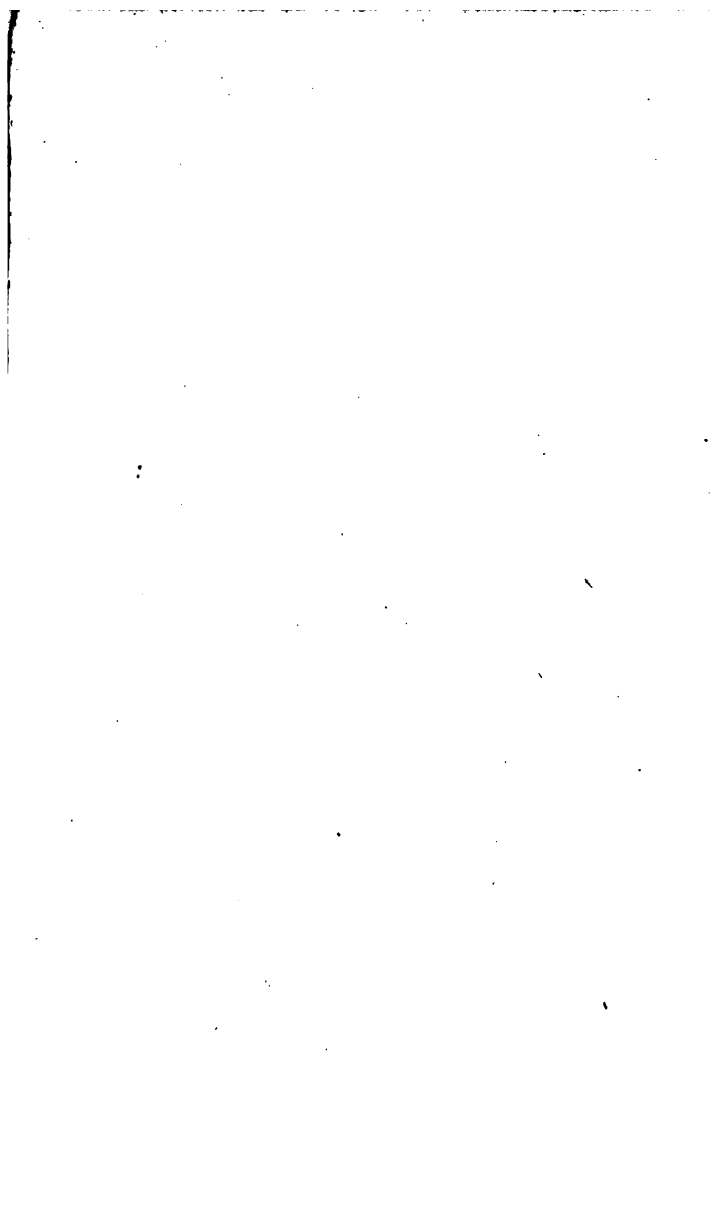
Meanwhile the child had better have change of locality and air. Western air, as they proposed, would be decidedly best, provided they avoided the malarious portions of the country.

They kept the good news for Nettie until after the wedding; then, you may be sure,

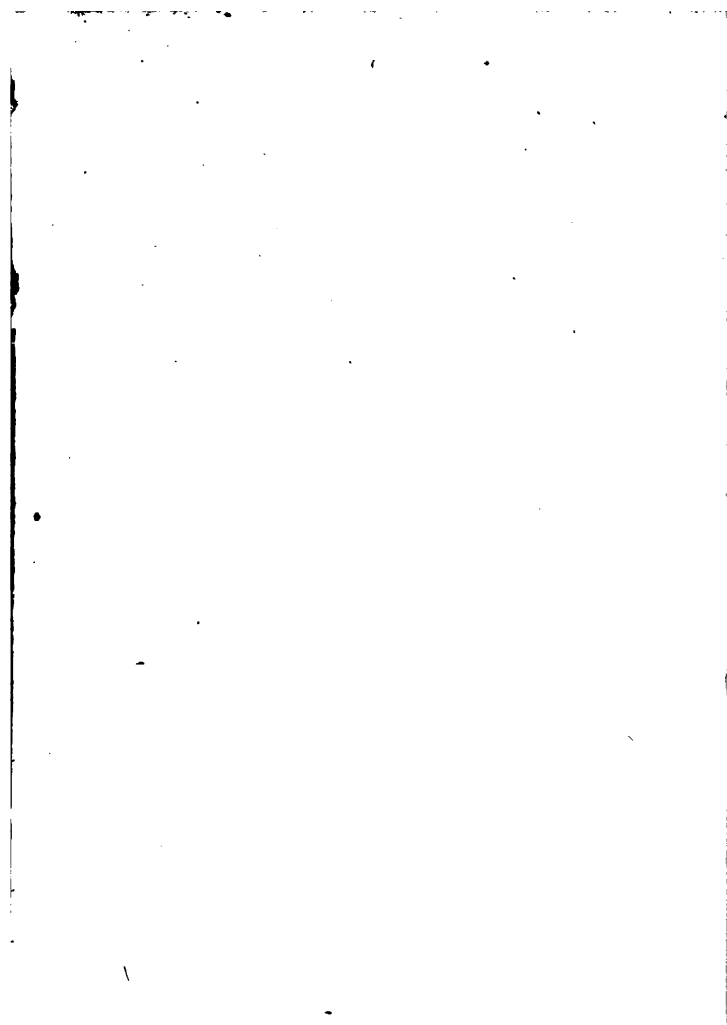
they were all very happy, and Nettie's eyes, although they were blind, sparkled with pleasure when the surgeon general proclaimed the good tidings, and her health was drank by Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone.

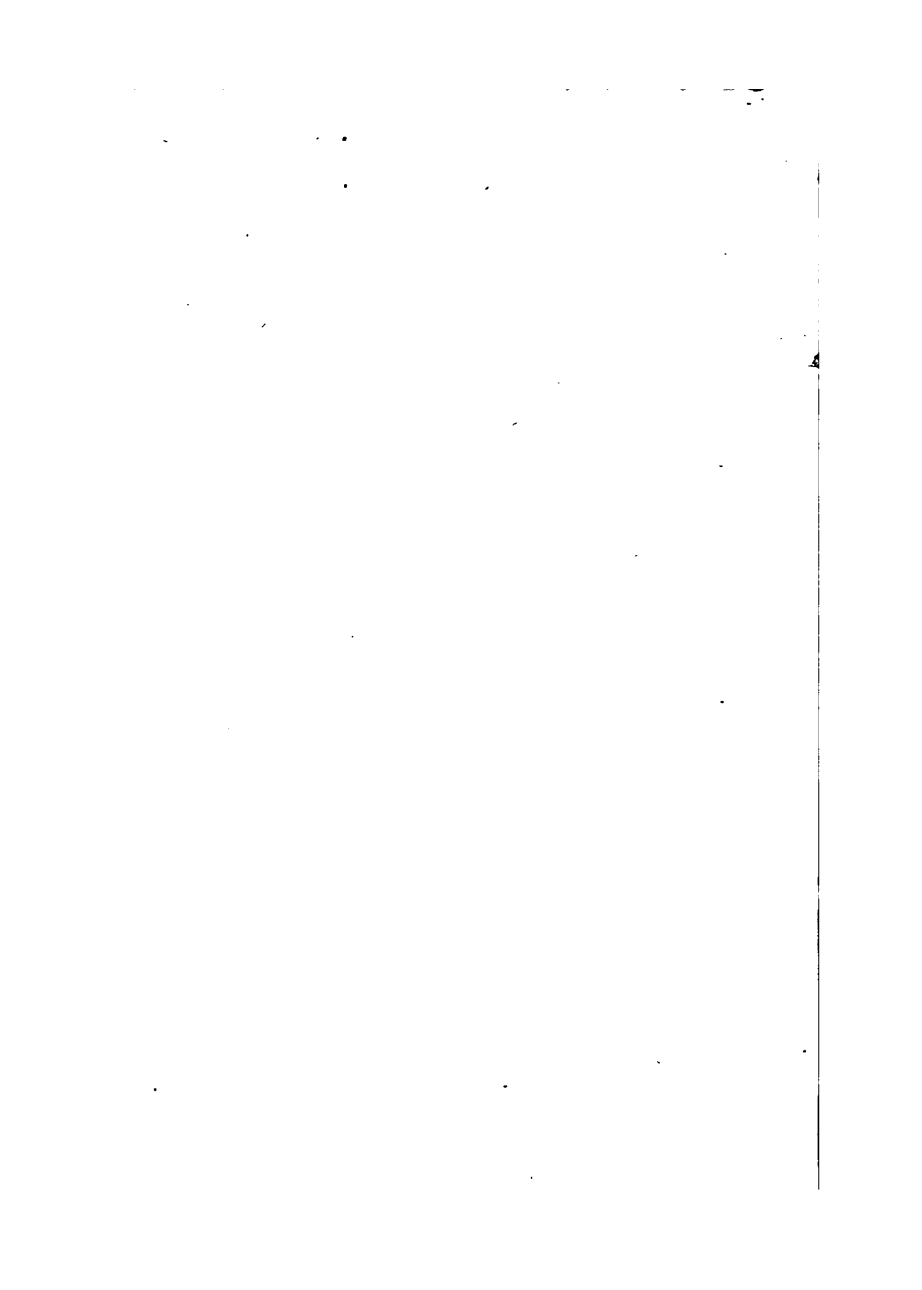












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